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# NEO-HINDUISM

AN EXPOSITION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF  
VEDANTISM (YOGA PHILOSOPHY)

BY

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## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Swami Vivekananda, the patriot saint of Modern India, was born at Calcutta on January 13, 1863. His father Vishwanath Dutt was a brilliant lawyer and was held in high esteem as a talented and cultured citizen. Narendranath, his son and our hero, was immensely proud of him as also of his mother Devi Bhuvaneshwari. Of his father Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda, once said : "Wherever my father's blood went, there was greatness." Devi Bhuvaneshwari was a woman in a thousand. Devoted, pious, loving, she had personality enough to mould the character of her children. She was gifted with an exceptional memory and she could sing hundreds of devotional songs. Narendranath inherited his intellect from his father and tender loving nature from his mother. In a lecture in U. S. America on 'Indian Womanhood' our hero affectionately referred to his mother to whom he said he owed everything good and great he had.

The early years of our hero were passed in the bosom of a happy and well-to-do family. Vishwanath Dutt commanded a very good practice and prodigally spent all that he earned to surround his wife and children with every kind of comfort and even luxury. As a child Narendranath was extremely naughty and self-willed; and we are told that his mother had very often to place him under the water-tap to tame his naughtiness. All the same he was very loving and devoted. Generous to a fault, he gave whatever he had on his person—be it a new dhoti or a gold ornament—to wandering sadhus for whose life he had an uncontrollable attraction ever since childhood. His tender emotionalism was nurtured on the devotional songs of his mother and his favourite play was to worship the clay images of Rama and Krishna, Shiva and Kali; he used to sit in front of these dear images in a meditating posture and whether he played at contemplation or contemplation was play to him we do not know; but some-



times for hours together he sat absorbed in that boyish contemplation. Rama was his favourite Deity to begin with; but later, the throne was occupied by Shiva, and Rama went into disfavour because he had married and the boyish imagination of Narendranath had commenced to admire the ascetic more than the householder. 'See this line on my palm?' Narendranath used to ask his friends. 'Well, it means, I would never marry. I am going to become a sadhu.'

After a course of vernacular instruction, partly at school and partly at home, Narendranath joined the Metropolitan Institute, Calcutta, at the tender age of seven (1870). Nine years later he passed the Matriculation examination. Perhaps his secondary education would have been finished earlier, had he not been required to spend two years of his life 1877 and 1878 at Raipur (C. P.) in comparative idleness. Even when he was studying at Calcutta, Narendranath was never a studious lad; whatever he studied, he studied at odd snatches of time. His main occupation seemed to be play. He was very fond of music, vocal and instrumental, and his father got him trained as a musician under expert tuition. Music, gymnastics, and outdoor sports practically absorbed all his time.

Even when he went to college (1880) this life did not much change. His precocious intellect wandered over every department of knowledge with equal facility and gradually, as the seriousness of life dawned upon him, he used to devote hours of his night time to intellectual pursuits; but those pursuits embraced every variety of topics except the college course. It was only when the annual examination approached, that Narendranath began to interest himself with his text-books; all the same he managed to secure a second class in the university examinations. His social and musical gifts threw him in the midst of gay and frivolous company and these bohemian associates claimed almost all his day-time. But like the lotus leaf growing in water but not wetted by it, Narendranath instinctively kept his purity in the midst of these artistic pleasure-seekers.

While thus his early college years were spent in gay pleasure-hunting and omnivorous reading, the former claiming the lion's share of his time, the genius of Narendranath began to be more and more attracted to the Eternal Problem whose shadow falls upon the mind of every youth. But though every young man is faced with the Problem, it is not every young man who squarely and seriously meets it. After a little ratiocination and argumentation, the average youth decides one way or the other and then hermetically seals the opening of his mind against any further encroachment of the question. It is a pity that the shallowness of unthinking and impatient youth is called upon to pronounce judgment on a problem which more than any other demands seriousness, patience and thought. To the average youth, it is not even a problem, but a casual topic, one amongst many, of no greater importance than the selection of his dress. In fact the problem of the sartorial outfit occupies more the attention of our youngsters than the problem of the existence of God. The former means so much to him, the latter has anyhow to be disposed of, no matter how; and whether his final reply thereto is affirmative or in the negative is a matter of comparative triviality to him. He is satisfied that the problem has been disposed of.

With Narendranath the case was entirely different. He went through the boyish and shallow scepticism of the average youth, no doubt, but his poetic, artistic, idealistic nature unconsciously rebelled against a scheme of the universe with no God occupying the mental throne of humanity. His deep sense of the Beautiful recoiled from the ugliness of a world bereft of God. His sense of the Good too shrank from the conception of the world with the moral law withdrawn. Only his partiality for Truth as he saw it heartened him to stand by a theory which fully satisfied the logic of the intellect.

It will thus be seen that while Truth, as he conceived it, was drawing him towards Atheism or Agnosticism, his love for the Beautiful and the Good was drawing him away from the conclusions of his sturdy, though limited, logic. It was as if a man should run up to the very edge

of a precipice and then reel at the sight of the deep abyss beneath. These two equally balanced forces gave him no mental rest but perpetually harassed him. Unfortunately for his mental peace, the innate love of the Beautiful and the Good was an instinct while Truth, as he saw it, was a process, and it is no wonder that the instinct had to, for a time at least, yield before the superior attractions of the ratiocinating process which seemed to be progress. Mill, Spencer, Huxley and a host of western contemporary writers and thinkers more and more claimed the absorbing attention of Narendranath till at last this Great Doubt assumed more and more the form of an acute mental disease whose torments must first of all be allayed if any progress was to be made in any direction.

All his efforts to forget and drown his mental agonies failed. The gaiety of his bohemian friends began to pall on him. His doubt, with a capital D, tore through every veil under which he sought to protect his mind and give it peace, and forced him to push on and on his inquiries into Truth, till at last he came to the conviction that 'If This is true, what else does matter? If This is not true, what do our lives matter?' He became a member of the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj. But the pronouncedly rationalistic bent of the Brahmo mind was unsatisfying to his mystic urge and the *Samajic* hotch potch of Christian Theism and Upanishadic Vedantism with a veneer of nineteenth century rationalism failed to attract him. Neither Keshabchander Sen, the idol of his early youth, nor Debendra Nath Tagore, with the aristocratic charm of his devotional nature, could enable him to grapple with the higher problems of his mind. Outwardly he was a happy youth. The felicity of his domestic life was unalloyed. He was still the *beau ideal* of his college and was always in demand where merry parties were to be made up. He was still the brilliant undergraduate who could if he would gain the first rank in the university examination and carry off all the prizes and scholarships. But there was in his heart an ever widening gap and life appeared empty and unreal to him. He went on and on the doubting path of the intellect. He could experience

within himself the truth of Hamilton's famous dictum 'A learned ignorance is the end of all philosophy and the beginning of religion'. He has unconsciously described the tortures of his own mind while portraying the early spiritual struggles of his master Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Says he :—

"There are moments in our life when tired of all the ratiocinations of dull and dead logic, tired of plodding through books which after all teach us nothing, the heart of our heart sends out a wail at times. 'Is there no one in this universe who can show me the light? If Thou art, show light to me! Why dost Thou not speak? Why send so many messengers and not Thyself come to me? In this world of fight and faction, whom am I to follow and believe? If Thou art the God of man and woman alike, why comest not Thou to Thy child and see if he be not ready?' To most of us come such thoughts in moments of great depression, but such are the temptations that surround us that the next moment we forget. For a time it would seem the doors of the Heaven were going to be opened for us, for a time it would seem we were going to plunge into the Light Effulgent, but the animal man again shakes off all these angelic visions. Down we go, animal man once more, eating, drinking, dying and dying, eating and drinking again and again. But there are exceptional minds which are not to be turned away so easily, which when once attracted can never be turned back, whatever the temptations in their way, which want to know Truth, knowing that Life must go! They say 'let it go in a noble conquest!' and surely what conquest is nobler than the conquest of the lower self, than the solution of this problem of life and death, of good and evil?"

About this time in the life of Narendranath, happened one of those 'accidents' which was destined to profoundly influence his future life. As we have seen already, Narendranath was the soul of social circles and parties and no party was deemed to be complete unless he was present. His brilliancy in conversation, his skill in music, his jovial, light-hearted nature made every party mirthful. A neigh-

bouring friend of his had received a surprise visit from Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint of Dakshineshwar, and he was called upon to make up an agreeable party of young men. Others were invited and naturally he thought of Narendranath also. Narendranath was an expert musician and Shri Ramakrishna loved nothing so much as songs. Therefore an urgent summons was sent up to Narendranath's house. Narendranath was not at home but soon returned and then he was led to the friend's house. He sang a few sweet and melodious songs which sent thrill after thrill through the body of Shri Ramakrishna till at last the sage was thrown into ecstasy. On coming down to the plane of consciousness, the saint asked Narendranath to be seated near him, made all sorts of kind enquiries, carefully observed his chest, hands and face and smilingly requested him to come over to Dakshineshwar.

When a few weeks later, Narendranath accompanied some of his friends to Dakshineshwar, it was more the pleasure of the outing in the beautiful surroundings of Dakshineshwar that was the attraction than the fateful interview with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He could not, of course, decently refuse to visit the saint after having once reached the groves of Dakshineshwar. Again he was asked to sing and again was saint Ramakrishna thrown into samadhi by the ecstatic feelings that were roused in him by the pathos and beauty of the songs. Again did Ramakrishna ask him to be seated near him and again did he examine his chest, neck, eyes, face, palms, etc. Narendranath was not at all impressed by these things. On the contrary he thought Shri Ramakrishna must be some brain-sick man. But he could not see how Shri Ramakrishna could ask him as if by insight 'Do you see a light, a *Jyoti* when about to fall asleep?' Narendra, who had this experience since his childhood, had never attached any special significance thereto. He could not even imagine that it was his own peculiar experience; so he replied by a counter question 'Does not everybody see the light just before falling asleep?' Shri Ramakrishna gravely said: 'It is only the Jnanasiddhas who get this experience.'

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

At the end of this interview Narendranath was forced to promise that he would visit the saint again. Beyond the fact that the saint appeared to love him, he saw nothing which should induce him to repeat his visit. But since the word was given, Narendranath once again found himself at Dakshineshwar. Shri Ramakrishna applied to Narendranath one of his mystic tests. He threw him into unconsciousness and then asked him several peculiar questions. This interview in a way decided the fate of Narendranath, because though he did not yet accept Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, still he was profoundly convinced that far from being a brain-sick person, Shri Ramakrishna was richly endowed with higher occult powers and might perhaps resolve the spiritual doubts of Narendranath !

The visits began to be repeated, the visits began to be prolonged, the visits began to be important. Narendranath gradually came to accept the lead of Shri Ramakrishna. After he had lapsed into a kind of philosophical agnosticism as a result of his study of Spencer, Huxley and Mill, the youthful Narendranath found himself called upon to struggle in an ethical sense and this struggle seems to have received the help, the first help of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Says his college friend, the distinguished Doctor Sir Brajendranath Seal:—

“The sovereignty of Universal Reason and the negation of the individual as the principle of morals were ideas that soon came to satisfy Vivekananda's intellect and gave him an assured conquest over scepticism and materialism. But this brought him no peace. The conflict now entered deeper into his soul ; for the creed of Universal Reason called on him to suppress the yearning and susceptibilities of his artistic nature and bohemian temperament. His senses were keen and acute, his natural cravings and passions strong and impetuous, his youthful susceptibilities tender, his conviviality free and merry. To suppress these was to kill his natural spontaneity,—almost to suppress himself. The struggle now took a seriously ethical turn, reason struggling for mastery with passion and sense. The fascinations of the sense

and the cravings of a youthful nature now appeared to him as impure, as gross and carnal. This was the hour of the darkest trial for him. His musical gifts brought him associates for whose manner and morals he had bitter and undisguised contempt. But his convivial temperament proved too strong for him."

It was at this stage of Narendranath's life that chance threw him into intimate contact with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and it appears that the first problem that the saint of Dakshineswar was called upon to face was the ethical as distinguished from the spiritual problem. The extreme and almost ideal love which Shri Ramakrishna bore for Narendranath together with this help and guidance at an important period in his life completely won him over even when his intellect was still divided between agnosticism and Vedanta. Shri Ramakrishna first conquered the heart of Narendranath. His head did not so easily and so early capitulate.

All the while Narendranath was still a student at college, perfunctorily going through his texts, attending college lectures, playing sports and leading a blissful life of perfect domestic felicity. He was the pride of his father, the joy of his mother, the ideal of his younger brothers and sister. His intellectual eminence, oratorical powers, forceful personality, prepossessing appearance all pointed to law as the career wherein he would thrive, and naturally it was the ambition of his father to make of his son as distinguished a barrister as the late W. C. Bannerjee, then the leading legal star at Calcutta. For this purpose it was necessary to send Narendranath to England; but there was this difficulty that there was not the necessary wherewithal to enable Narendranath to stay in England for the prescribed period. The difficulty was got over when a wealthy gentleman with a marriageable daughter was found willing to look after the future of Narendranath who of course was expected to look after the future of the marriageable daughter. The girl was accomplished; the chances and outlook were bright and rosy and the spirit of adventure which is the natural weakness—or is it strength?—of every youth gaining the

upper hand, Narendranath was willing to lay aside his persistent objection to marriage when an unexpected thing happened (1884).

Vishwanath Dutt, the father of Narendranath, suddenly died of heart disease. He had expected to live till a ripe year, to set up his eldest son in practice and see everything bright, happy and secure before leaving the world. But Destiny plays cruel pranks on us all and if Vishwanath Dutt expected thus to see his dreams realized and escape from the consequences of his prodigal and improvident life, he was mistaken. His sudden death was a blow to the family in more senses than one. It suddenly plunged it from a state of comparative affluence to one of complete destitution. So long as Vishwanath Dutt was living, he could maintain the style of life, ease and comfort to which he had accustomed himself, his wife and children. His death changed the aspect of affairs. It indefinitely postponed the question of marriage. It forced Narendranath to apply the 'axe of retrenchment' to the family budget. Long and weary was the struggle; and it never ended. Narendranath was forced to bear the brunt of this crisis. He was suddenly awakened from his collegiate frivolities and his Dakshin-eshwar ecstasies. He was forced to find bread for the family before he could find illumination for himself. Fortunately he had passed his B.A. Examination this year and he could get temporary work but his idealism proved too strong for him and the whole thing disgusted him beyond measure.

This sudden and severe suffering had a sobering effect on the impetuosity of Narendranath. It made his heart more tender, more susceptible to emotion, more adapted to listen to the Voice of Bhakti. In future it enabled him to feel for and share the sufferings of the poorest of the poor. It deepened his resolution, intensified his longing for Vairagya, gave a heroic tinge to his final renunciation when it came in due course. As such the privations and calamities proved a blessing in disguise.

Narendranath had not yet cut himself adrift from the world. He was still attending the law classes but



his attendance was perfunctory and his heart was always at Dakshineswar. The stimulating and illuminating company of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was his sheet anchor in these dark days. As he came to realize more and more the worth of the Master, he began systematically to study Vedanta and get all his doubts and difficulties resolved from him. Gradually his intellect was conquered by Vedanta. But still the question of Realization remained. 'What is intellectual conviction' he said to his Master 'till Realization is attained?' From August 1885, the Master developed symptoms of throat cancer, and Narendranath was shocked at the impending departure of the Master. But more shocked was he at the prospect of missing all his dreams of Realization in case the Master's career was cut off immediately. He literally began to plague Shri Ramakrishna. As months passed the Master realized that the time of Mahasamadhi was approaching and so set himself to give his parting grace to all his chosen disciples. Narendranath felt restive and impatient. The Master laughed at his folly. 'My child' he said 'if I am born to convey my Special Grace on you, how can I pass away without accomplishing the purpose of my life? Have trust. Arrange your home affairs and come. You will have everything. What do you want?' 'To be immersed in samadhi for days together with occasional intervals for food' was the reply. 'I thought' Shri Ramakrishna said 'you wanted to be in a still higher condition.'

One evening, while Narendranath was contemplating in a recumbent posture, Light with a capital L, came upon him with abrupt suddenness. The total cessation of bodily functions together with the rigidity of the body and the cry 'Oh Gopalda, where is my body?' frightened his brother disciples. They shook his body, tried artificial respiration and, when nothing would avail, they ran up to the Master who was resting on the upper story and in a terrified voice explained all that had happened. The Master quietly smiled and said 'Don't disturb him. He has troubled me enough to reach that stage.' It was then that all understood that it was the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

When Narendranath came down to body consciousness he went up to the Master and quietly fell at his feet. The Master said 'Now Mother has shown you all. I lock the mango and keep its key. When Mother's work is over, you will have it again.'

A few months later, Shri Ramakrishna entered into Mahasamadhi (August 1886). The band of disciples that had devotedly gathered round him began now to waver and some began to think of returning home. Narendranath, who now had become Swami Vivekananda put courage and faith into their wavering hearts and started the monastery at Barangore near Calcutta. He felt called upon to show his unswerving loyalty to the memory and wishes of the Master. He felt that 'his behest on me was that I shall devote myself to the service of the band of the all-renouncing devotees founded by him and in this I have to persevere, come what may.' So from August 1886 to about the middle of 1888, we find Swamiji stationed practically at Barangore (Calcutta) nursing the newly-established Math with all the care and patience which an infant institution invariably requires.

From the middle of 1888 to about the middle of 1890, Swamiji spent his time partly at the Math and partly in wanderings. In 1888, he went on a pilgrimage to Benares, Ayodhya, Agra, Lucknow, Brindavan and Hathras, Hrishikesh where he returned to Calcutta in November (1888). He did not much stir out in 1889. He seems to have visited only Gazipur and Allahabad in that year. He spent the first four months of 1890 at Gazipur in the stimulating company of Parari Baba. Thence he went to Benares. In July 1890 however he left the Math finally and cut himself deliberately adrift from the brother sanyasins. He returned to the Math only in 1897, after his return from America and England.

The object of the Swami in thus snapping asunder the golden chain that linked him with his fellow sanyasins was threefold. In the first place, the proximity of his blood relations at Calcutta was a serious handicap to him. As he expressed it in a letter to a friend: "I have been vouchsafed the ideal shastra. I have seen the ideal man.

And yet fail myself to get on with anything to the end. This is my profound misery. And particularly I see no chance of success while I live near Calcutta. In Calcutta, live my mother and two brothers. I am the eldest, the second is preparing for the First Arts examination and the third is young. They were quite well off before. But since my father's death, it is going very hard with them, even having to keep fasting at times. Living near Calcutta, I have to witness their adversity and the quality of *rajas* prevailing my egotism sometimes develops into the form of a desire that rises to plunge me into action. In such moments a fierce fighting ensues in my mind."

The other reason was to intensify his spiritual experiences and practise *sadhanas* on a very grand basis. 'Death or success' in effort was the resolve with which he started. This roving tendency was shared by other disciples also. Then there was to be discovered the 'Mother's work' for which Shri Ramakrishna had 'locked his mango and kept the key'. The enterprising and adventurous nature of youth may also have contributed to the arriving of the final decision: whatever the causes, the decision was most beneficial. It widened the outlook of the Swami, threw him in touch with the best minds in the country, enabled him to study conditions at first hand, and finally enabled him to find out the 'Mother's work' for which he was born.

His severe austerities on the Himalayas brought on him a severe illness which would, but for a lucky accident, have ended in death. On the improvement of his health he decided to tour all over India. For thirty months Swamiji was wandering all over India. From Almora, Shrinagar and Hrishikesh, he returned to Delhi. Thence he went to Rajputana, thence again to Gujarat and Kathiawar, then again to Central India whence he came to Bombay in July 1892. From Bombay, he went down to Poona, Mahabaleshwar, Kolhapur, Goa, Bangalore, Mysore, Cochin, Trivandrum, Madura, Rameshwaram, Kanyakumari, Ramnad, Pondichery, Madras and Hyderabad. All this travel occupied six or seven months.

'Alone, unfriended, melancholy, low' was the experience of Dr. Goldsmith during his early wanderings in

France, Switzerland and Italy. But that was probably because he had not the qualifications needed to make up an ideal and respected wanderer. Swami Vivekananda possessed all these qualifications and hence he was enabled to spend these months in comparative comfort and he could utilize this grand opportunity for the prosecution of his studies in Indian History, sociology, theology, arts and conditions. Swamiji was eminently qualified to undertake so vast a study. And it was on the basis of this careful study that he formed his theories about the rejuvenation of India. While it may be that patriotism was the first love of the Swami and love of God and religion came later, it is equally true that the seed of patriotism sown in the collegiate days grew up in the course of these wanderings and made Swamiji the Patriot Saint of Modern India.

While it is true that wherever the Swami went he created profound impression, the impression he produced in South India was very wonderful indeed. The keen, subtle and at the same time devoted intellect of the Madrasite may be said to have 'discovered' Swamiji. His soaring genius, fiery patriotism, phenomenal knowledge, extraordinary dialectical skill, gifted oratory together with the charm of his magnetic personality completely conquered the enthusiastic and devoted heart of the Madrasite and when about this time came the news that a Parliament of Religions was to be held at Chicago, the admirers of the Swami determined that he should go to America. It was believed that this was a providential opportunity and afforded a historic opening which was not to be despised. "Here, Swamiji, is the opening for 'Mother's work'; please don't allow the opportunity to slip." Swamiji also began to share their enthusiasm and with the help of the Maharaja of Mysore, the Raja of Ramnad, (Sir) Subramania Aiyer and of several less known people, the wherewithal for the voyage, outfit and a few months' residence in America was found and Swamiji started on his historic mission in May 1893.

The Parliament of Religions was indeed a very grand idea. Whoever originally conceived it deserves the grateful homage of India, because, but for this opening, Swami

Vivekananda would not have been able to go to America and start his lifework on an international platform and an international basis. Even without the psychological opportunity provided by the Parliament of Religions, the Swami would have achieved renown and contributed his share to contemporary thought and activities. But without the adventitious aid of the Parliament he would not have been so dramatically and so successfully introduced to the whole civilised world. His powerful speech in the open session of the Parliament of Religions brought him instant fame and recognition and established his claim to be considered as a magnificent orator and a magnificent thinker. His popularity at the Parliament of Religions was revealed when the managers of the Sessions could silence restive crowds of impatient listeners by announcing that Swami Vivekananda would be the next speaker.

The success at the Parliament of Religions brought Swamiji invitations for lectures from all parts of the country (U. S. A.). Invitations for hospitality also poured in. All this enabled the Swami to not only maintain financial independence but also to save some money for his brother disciples in India. Had the Swami been the least worldly minded, he could have amassed huge sums for the cause. But he refused to sell religion. He refused to make profit out of spiritual love which was always to be broadcasted gratis. As a concession to the western atmosphere, he maintained himself and his work out of profits accrued from his lectures on secular subjects. Even here he was most reluctant in the beginning.

The work began to grow apace. After the first noise had subsided, after the initial curiosity of the great American nation was gratified, came real seekers after Truth and Light and for them Swamiji held regular classes. He trained them in Vedanta, Yoga, the science of Realization. He tried to make their minds introspective. He sought to substitute peace of mind for the western hunger for thrills and excitement. He sought to lift up every man and give him a push. He did not preach any sectarian religion. He preached the universal religion of

exalted thought, emotion and action. And all this work he accomplished without descending into the arena of sectarianism, bigotry and controversy. To the highest and best minds in the country he showed how Vedanta supports and even anticipates the latest discoveries of modern science. To the mass of men and women he showed how even by leading the life of the average householder and citizen a man or a woman could attain the Highest. He had hopes for all, be they howsoever fallen; he had condemnation for none. Like a mighty whale, he majestically sailed in the social life of the great American sub-continent, scattering seeds of knowledge, purity, love and faith as he passed along. Altogether his first sojourn in U. S. America was successful beyond measure and, if one may say so, beyond expectations.

Swamiji's first sojourn in U. S. America extended to about twenty-five months after which he went over to England *via* Paris. His stay in England and on the Continent was confined to about three or four months and in December 1895, we find him again back to U. S. America. Meanwhile invitations from India were pouring from all quarters. He was anxious to return to the central scene of his work and to lay at the feet of the Motherland the laurels he had earned in Europe and America. But he could not disregard the work in England and U. S. America that was growing apace. Besides the work in England and U. S. America was at bottom work for India and India alone. Again and again Swamiji assured his colleagues, friends and admirers in India that 'One blow struck outside India is equal to one hundred thousand struck within'; and it was this need of supplementing Indian work with foreign work or, to put it better still, co-ordinating his Indian with European and American activities that made the Swami stay in America and Europe for, in all, well nigh five years.

We saw Swamiji back to New York in December 1895. For over three months he took up the threads of his work there, and then in April he again left for Europe. This time he gave six months to England and two to Switzerland and Germany. On December 17th 1896, he

started for India reaching Colombo about the middle of January 1897.

The magnificent reception accorded to him at Colombo was followed by equally magnificent receptions throughout his historic journey from Colombo to Almora and then to Calcutta and, at Madras and Calcutta, the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. And this was but natural; for Madras had 'discovered' the Swami and Calcutta was the home of the Swami. With childlike simplicity the Swami told the huge and often unwieldy audiences that he welcomed the manifestations of all enthusiasm. Only he prayed them to make it permanent. He wanted to strike while the iron was hot. He wanted to take the maximum advantage of the enthusiasm that was roused and put it into constructive channels. He wanted to simultaneously start into reality all his cherished dreams for the regeneration of the Motherland. He appealed to the youth of the land to dedicate their all at the altar of the Motherland. Youth, he said, is the most appropriate time for a man to renounce. It is, he urged, the freshest and unsmelt flowers that are to be laid at the feet of the Lord. 'Have tremendous faith in yourself' he said 'like the faith I had when I was a boy and which I am working out. What I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel within which resides a heart which is made of the same element as a thunderbolt.' 'Two-hundred thousand young men armed with faith, with purity, with love, can revolutionize the world.' And the thirty months he lived in India were devoted to the finding of these two-hundred thousand young men.

Swamiji's central idea was to carry religion to the doors of the poorest of the poor and along with religion he wanted to take secular knowledge also to the ignorant masses. Swamiji's ambition was to rouse the masses and improve their condition, because he felt that unless the masses were roused India could not prosper. Knowledge secular and spiritual was to be taken to the doors of the masses. Their hardships on occasions of plague and famines were to be mitigated by philanthropic and humanitarian work. To awaken the masses by restating and

revivifying the ancient religion, to purge that religion of all the dross and impurity that has clung to it through centuries of stagnation and degradation was the dream of his life. Wherever he turned his eyes, he found mountains of work. On the one hand, he saw the mountains of work awaiting the advent of faith and enthusiasm and on the other hand he saw the educated classes, the rightful leaders of the society, misdirecting their energies for pettifogging schemes of social reform and overlooking the real need of the times. And what saddened him most was that, while work was beckoning him from all directions, he found himself daily more and more in the grip of disease and ill-health, hankering for work but powerless to do it!

So we find the sad spectacle that while on the one hand he said 'We shall sound the drum of Advaita in the heart of every home, in the fields, and in the market place, in the hills and in the plains! Be my helpers, all of you. To work! To work!' on the other hand, immediately on his return to India and while his power for constructive work stood at its highest he felt himself more and more unable to cope with the work that was growing apace. Immediately after his historic reception at Calcutta, he was forced, on medical advice, to go to Darjeeling; and during all the thirty months he stayed in India, he was for the most part so ill that it was thought that a fresh visit to America and Europe may perhaps rehabilitate his health. This is nothing less than tragedy in the life of the Swami. That his life was cut off before forty is itself a tragedy of the highest order. But that even this short span was crowded in the last decade with illness of all sorts makes our grief all the more poignant.

We can well imagine how the strain of thought and emotion must have told upon his constitution. Even early in youth, he had developed symptoms of diabetes; but with determined persistence and vigorous exercise, he checked the inroads of this ravaging disease. But the severe life of intense thought and intense emotion practically sapped his vigorous constitution. Either of these two is enough to tax a man's physical resources to the



utmost; both in combination can well be expected to demolish the strongest constitution. The demands of work on his physical system from 1893 were tremendous. All these causes, combined, shattered his constitution while he was in the prime of manhood and crippled his usefulness to a very astonishing degree.

Swamiji's sojourn in Kashmere was intended mainly as a health recouping measure. It proved however to be a health destroying one. His visits to Amarnath and Kshir-Bhavani intensified his preoccupation of mind. As he used to say 'Shiva has entered my brain; and he would not go.' This mental absorption with probably a forewarning that the end was approaching made the Swami more and more seek intellectual detachment from even his cherished and usual activities. On his return from Kshir-Bhavani, he said, "No more is Hari Om! It is all Mother now. I have been very wrong. Mother said to me 'What if unbelievers should enter my temples and defile my images? What is that to you? Do you protect me? or do I protect you?' *So there is no more patriotism.* I am only a little child." This attitude of growing mental isolation, together with strange words like 'I am preparing for death. A great tapasya has come over me and I am making ready for death' frightened his associates and friends. His abrupt return from the last voyage to the West was only a straw indicative of the direction of the wind. His health was becoming feebler and feebler and the hints of the approaching end became more and more distinct. 'Whenever death approaches' he used to say, 'all my weakness vanishes. I am as hard as anything; for I have touched the feet of the Lord.' And yet his fellow disciples hoped against hope that the end was still far away, at least appreciably away; for had not his Master Shri Ramakrishna told him 'I lock your mango and keep the key. When Mother's work is over you will have it again.' How fondly did the disciples think that they would have some plainer hint of the end from Swamiji! 'We shall hear something of the Mango of Shri Ramakrishna' they thought 'before the end comes.' Alas! How mistaken were their conclusions and assumptions!

A couple of days before the end, on the sacred Ekadashi day, after all had eaten meals appropriate to the fasting day, Swamiji began to wash the hands of his disciples and brother monks. Naturally they protested. Swamiji said 'Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.' Something checked the words. 'But it was for the last time;' and this was well; for here too the last time had come.

On the 4th of July 1902, Swamiji got up early in the morning. After a brisk walk, he sat in the hall of the Muth meditating with closed doors! In the afternoon, he taught Sanskrit grammar and the Vedas to his disciples. In the evening he again went out for a walk. On return, he made kind inquiries of those around him and then sat up for meditation. But that meditation was the last one. On the wings of meditation he soared up to regions from which there is no return!

Swamiji, when he entered into Mahasamadhi, was hardly forty years old. Six years' discipleship of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa took him to the realms of realization. Seven years of wanderings over the length and breadth of India broad-bottomed his personality and widened his outlook. Nine years of public career—national and international—was all that was left for him; yet how crowded these nine years of glorious work! Well does the poet say 'Smoulder not for days and hours and blacken the house with smoke. Flare up even if it be for a minute. Always prefer flame to smoke'.

The unique popularity of the Swami is due to the contribution he made to the national thought. We must consider the times in which his life was cast and the feeble national consciousness of the early nineties. Swamiji's gospel was one of hope and faith. He never gave way to pessimism and despair, because he knew that India had enough capability for expansion. 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is achieved' was his battlecry. Others went abroad as political beggars. He went abroad as a spiritual Master. Others said to foreigners 'Give us this and give us that.' He said to them 'Take this, and this and this and God bless you.' The tone of seeking is one, the tone of having is another and Swami Vivekananda

impressed others by his natural tone of having. 'I seem to be the man born after many centuries. I feel that India is young.' Considering Swamiji's achievements nobody will dare say that the former remark is the outcome of vanity. His self-consciousness was fully justified by the splendour of his achievement. But what is more important for our purpose is his self-consciousness of his life's purpose. We can sum up his contribution to national thought and aspiration by quoting that little sentence of six words 'I feel that India is young'. That is indeed the message and the achievement of Swamiji !

"India is young ! India can expand ! India can break her chains ! India can yet rise in glory ! India's part is not yet fully played out !" . All these are axiomatic propositions and to-day are the property of every child in India ; but if this is so, the credit is due entirely to great persons like Swami Vivekananda who dinned these thoughts in the ears of the public by word of mouth, by power of the pen, by the inspiration of their personality, by the splendour of their achievements. To revolutionize the outlook of one entire generation is a magnificent achievement to be justly proud of and the Swami's achievement has been this.

Great deeds can be performed if only there are great qualities to support the effort ; and Swamiji's personality revealed a marvellous panorama of brilliant and profound qualities. It was not by luck or accident that he took the assembly hall at Chicago by storm and produced tremendous impression by a thirty-minute speech. To produce such an effect over such an audience within such a limited measure of time is nothing short of marvellous and this marvellous phenomenon can be explained only on the assumption that Swamiji must have possessed magnificent qualities of the highest order in the most dazzling proportion.

However it is not the showy qualities that first dazzle and then fade away, it is not the fleeting influence of magnetic personality which holds masses captive for good or evil,—it is not these qualities that we associate with the name of Swami Vivekananda. We are glad that he had

these qualities in superabundant proportion. But to us the message of the Swami is of so prime importance that we feel that even unaided by the adventitious aid of dazzling qualities he would have, may be at a slower pace, worked his way into the hearts and heads of people of three continents. The noble message of the Swami therefore holds a charm for us, a lesson for us that can never be replaced by the temporary attraction of any other thing. And we propose to study in this book this message of the Swami as directly learnt from his own words. A Christian saint once said 'Stand aside you philosophers! silence, oh prophets! do Thou speak to me, oh Lord!' With equal fervour one may wish to know in Swamiji's own words, the message that he delivered to citizens of three continents, the message of Truth and Love.

## CHAPTER II

### THOUGHTS ON HINDUISM IN GENERAL

The Swami's life work was the revival of Vedic Hinduism. The Swami was the greatest modern exponent of the ancient vedic religion; and when we say ancient vedic religion, we mean the vedic religion in its purest and most perfected form. There never was a time during the last three thousand years and more when the religion of the Vedas, we mean the religion of the ancient vedic Upanishads, was not undergoing some transformation or other. There has been a constant growth, a steady erosion, a gradual broad-bottoming of this Faith of the Aryans and the ambition of the Swami was not only to revive the religion of the Upanishads but also to preserve, maintain and solidify all the health-giving additions that have been made to it. All the four yogas which we have discussed in the next four chapters were not fully and completely evolved at the time of the Upanishads. The school of Bhakti was the last to blossom. The school of Bhakti soon became the religion of the masses, but the Upanishads do not make a very exhaustive analysis of the Bhakti element in man. The Rajayoga, which in the days of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad seems to have made considerable progress, does not appear to have very much flourished after the time of the Gita and the Gita even makes a cursory reference to it. The Jnanayoga seems to have received more and more additions in Buddhistic and post-Buddhistic eras and the statement of Jnanayoga by Shri Shankaracharya seems to be far in advance of the embryonic ideas of the Upanishads. The Karmayoga went through such a number of vicissitudes that its very central idea was later on lost, as since the days of the Bhagvat, it was in part absorbed by the school of Bhakti. When therefore a modern prophet comes and aims at reviving the ancient vedic religion, he has a very difficult task, in that the so-called vedic era was never really in existence and that the highest expression of our ancient faith has been the work not merely of

post-vedic times but may be said to be the work of post-Buddhistic times. Hence the difficulty.

When therefore we say that the Swami wanted to revive pristine Aryan religion, we should not be understood to mean that it was only the Upanishadic statement of that religion which he supported. What he wanted to do was to revive our religion by reviving all the best and noblest elements of it at any time, during any century. In short he wanted to revive all that was noblest, best, most health-giving, most suitable in the mother of all Faiths; and since our religion has been more or less evolving during all these shining centuries, the Swami wished to revive not only the religious and philosophical thought of ancient times but of modern times also. He set no limit to time, authority and system, provided all of them pertained to our needs and requirements.

Not only that. The Swami was prepared to adjust the old Hinduism to the requirements of to-day. He was prepared to take into consideration the changed circumstances of the present times. New times create new environments and create new needs also. All this must be provided for in the new statement of our religion. Similarly contact with the west and the study of western thought, culture and institutions has created the need of a fresh and modified statement of our philosophy, ethics and metaphysics; and unless and until this is done, the Hinduism of to-day would not be fit to face the dangers and difficulties that are threatening to engulf it. This was the considered opinion of the Swami.

To make Hinduism aggressive, to make the children of this most ancient faith powerful enough to cope with the problems that are facing them, was the ambition of Swamiji's life. Hinduism, he thought, was not a system of mere thought, of philosophy intended to amuse the learned metaphysicians. So, that was not his view of religion. What is the good of that religion which does not elevate the people belonging to it, which does not make them strong enough to bear the burden of the responsibilities that threaten them? Religion divorced from the actualities of the day was something which he refused to

recognize and hence it was that the Swami wanted a religion which would refuse to trample the poor under its heels, which would give solace to the widow and the orphan and bring bread to the mouth of the hungry. That was the religion which Swamiji wanted and he hoped that Neo-Hinduism would be such a kind of religion and that it would save India from the dangers that lie ahead of her in her onward path of glory and progress. That was the dream of the Swami.

In fact, Swamiji did want a most progressive, a most reformed, a most adaptable form of faith. Neo-Hinduism, he thought, must be made such. The Swami disliked the appellation of 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' forced upon us by the ancient Persians. He wanted us to discard it and begin to call ourselves by some more suitable name. Says he :—

“There is a word which has become very common as an appellation of our race and religion. The word Hindu requires a little explanation in connection with what I mean by Vedantism. This word 'Hindu' was the name that the ancient Persians used to apply to the river 'Sindhu'. Wherever in Sanskrit there is an 'S', in ancient Persian it changes into 'H'; so 'Sindhu' became 'Hindu'. Now this word Hindu as applied to the inhabitants of the other side of the Indus, has lost all its force in modern times, for all people that live on this side of the Indus no longer belong to one religion. There are the Hindus proper, the Mahommedans, the Parsees, the Christians, the Buddhists and Jains. The word Hindu in its literal sense ought to include all these. But as signifying the Religion, it would not be proper to call all these Hindus. It is very hard therefore to find any common name for our religion, seeing that this religion is a collection, so to speak, of various religions, of various ideas, of various ceremonies and forms, all gathered together almost without a name, and without a church and without an organisation. The only point where perhaps all our sects agree is that we all believe in the scriptures—the Vedas. All these Vedas, as you are aware, are divided into two portions—the Karma Kanda and the Jnana Kanda.

The Karma Kanda includes various sacrifices and ceremonials; the Jnana Kanda, as embodying the spiritual teachings of the Vedas known as the Upanishads, and the Vedanta, have always been cited as the highest authority by all our teachers, philosophers and writers, whether Dualist or Qualified Monist, or Monist. • Whatever be his philosophy or sect, every one in India has to find his authority in the Upanishads. If he cannot, his sect would be heterodox. Therefore perhaps the one name in modern times which would designate every Hindu throughout the land would be 'Vedantist' or 'Vaidik' as you may put it. And in that sense, I always use the words 'Vedantism' and 'Vedanta'." (Vol. III, pp. 228-29)

Evidently the Swami was not a believer in the adage 'What is in a name'. He thought that an expressive and appropriate name went a long way in giving prestige to man, sect, institution or religion. Therefore he devised for Hinduism an appropriate name which, though not adopted by the people, correctly describes our faith and nationality.

The general thoughts uttered by the Swami on Hinduism, *i. e.* on Vedanta, can be found in all his speeches. It would be impossible to epitomise them in brief. Their number, their importance and the classic form of their expression, make such an attempt well nigh impossible. We propose however to cull a few of these life-giving thoughts if only to show how original, life-giving, these thoughts are.

One of the besetting sins of our religion is the plurality of interpretations of the same, very same texts. The resources of the marvellous Sanskrit language have been prostituted to serve the ends of sectarian religions. In a sense, we shall have to admit that, where a sect could be born, could grow and thrive only by book-authority, it was necessary and inevitable that every new sect should have zealously sought to prove that a particular book or set of books contained their ideas. That very sanctity and authority attached to the Upanishads and like other books in a way forced the protagonists of all rival sects to stretch the language of the books and anyhow squeeze



their own meaning out of it. While in ancient times and in the middle ages this was inevitable, in modern days it is not necessary and for two reasons. In the first place the sanctity of these books, though it continues to exist, does not preclude us from seeking the aid of historical interpretation; and secondly the very plurality of these interpretations are now forcing us to choose one or the other in the light of modern canons of criticism and interpretation. The Swami's remarks on these points are most thought-provoking and deserve to be carefully studied. Says he:—

“In the midst of all these varying methods of reading and commenting our scriptures, it is very difficult indeed to find the thread that runs through all of them; coming to our commentators, the Advaitic commentator, whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is; but the same commentator, as soon as a Dualistic text presents itself, tortures it if he can, and brings the most queer meaning out of it. Same is the case with the Dualistic commentators also. Every Dualistic text is preserved and every text that speaks of non-Dualistic philosophy is tortured in any fashion he likes.

“It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a Dualist, as ardent an Advaitist, as ardent a Bhakta, as ardent a Jnani; and living with this man first put it into my head to understand the Upanishads and the texts of the scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators; and in my humble opinion, and in my researches I came to the conclusion that these texts are not at all contradictory but wonderfully harmonious, one idea leading up to the other. In all the Upanishads, they begin with Dualistic ideas with worship and all that and end with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas.

“Therefore I now find, in the light of this man's life, that the Dualist and the Advaitist need not fight each other. Each has a place and a great place in the national life. The Dualist must remain for he is as much part and parcel of the national religion as the Advaitist. One cannot exist without the other. One is the fulfilment of

the other, one is the building and the other is the top. Therefore any attempt to torture the texts of the Upanishads appears to me very ridiculous." (Vol. III, pp. 233-34)

The Swami was of opinion that this conflict between the Personal and the Impersonal God, between Dvāita and Advaita, was reconciled by Lord Krishna, and that he considers to be the great contribution of Lord Krishna to the Faith of the Aryans. The Swami was of opinion that this is at once the most original and the most satisfying contribution. Says he :—

"Who can understand the throes of the love of the Gopis,—the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love that even does not care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world, or the world to come. And here, my friends, through this love of the Gopis, has been found the only solution of the conflict between the Personal and the Impersonal God. We know how the Personal God is the highest point of human life; we know that it is philosophical to believe in an Impersonal God, immanent in the universe, of whom everything is but a manifestation. At the same time our souls hanker after something concrete, something which we want to grasp, at whose feet we can pour out our soul, and so on. The Personal God is therefore the highest conception of human nature. Yet reason stands aghast at such an idea. There was no solution and the only solution that can be found is what you read about the love of the Gopis. 'I do not want wealth, I do not want learning. I do not want even to go to heaven. Let me be born again and again but Lord Grant me this that I may have love for Thee and that for Love's sake.' A great landmark in the history of religion is here, the ideal of love for love's sake, work for work's sake, duty for duty's sake; and it fell for the first time from the lips of the greatest of all incarnations, Krishna, and for the first time in the history of humanity upon the soil of India. The religions of fear and temptations were gone forever and in spite of the fear of hell, and temptation to enjoyment in heaven, came the grandest of ideals, love for love's sake, duty for duty's sake, work for work's sake." (Vol. III, pp. 257-58)

The Swami was emphatically of opinion that the dangers that beset modern Hinduism require that all the sects and subsects of the country should unite and then face the common enemy. The Swami was convinced that sects were bound to remain and that they are even necessary. It would not only be futile but mischievous also to try to destroy sects and unite all into one. But though sects need not disappear, sectarian quarrels must. And the only way that sectarian quarrels will disappear is by bringing home to the minds of all sects the need of burying the hatchet as the phrase goes. One more thing is essential to establish harmony among the different sects and that is perfect insistence on the ground common to all and non-insistence on the non-essentials, *i.e.* the points of difference. If all the sects will concentrate more on what unites them instead of the points of departure, then they will be able to close up their ranks and present united front. The Swami was ever busy in discovering the common basis of Hinduism. His whole life was a search for such a basis : Says he :—

“ There are certain great principles in which I think we are—whether Vaishnavas, Saivas, Shaktas, Ganapatyas, whether belonging to the ancient Vedantists or the modern ones, whether belonging to the old rigid sects or the modern reformed ones, we are all one, and whoever calls himself a Hindu believes in certain principles. All will agree on the first point that we believe the Vedas to be the eternal teachings of the secrets of Religion. We all believe that this holy literature is without beginning and without end, coeval with nature which is without beginning and without end : and that all our religious differences, all our religious struggles must end when we stand in the presence of that holy book. It is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences. Let this principle first of all be preached broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the land. Let the Vedas have that prominence which they always deserve.

“ The second point we all believe in, is God, the creating, the preserving power of the whole universe, and unto whom it periodically returns to come out at

other periods and manifest this wonderful phenomenon called the universe. We may differ as to our conception of God. Still we are all believers in God. That man who does not believe in a most marvellous infinite power, from which everything has come, in which everything lives and to which everything must in the end return, cannot be called a Hindu. Let us try to preach this idea all over the land.

“The third idea is that, unlike all other races of the world, we do not believe that this world was created only so many thousand years ago and is going to be destroyed eternally on a certain day. Nor do we believe that the human soul has been created along with this universe just out of nothing. We believe in nature being without beginning and without end; only at psychological periods this gross material of the outer universe goes back to its finer stage, again to be projected outside. This wave-like motion is going on even before time began, through eternity and will remain for an infinite period of time.

“Next all Hindus believe that man is not only a gross material body, but there is something yet greater, the Atman, which has neither beginning nor end, which knows not what death is. And then this peculiar idea, different from that of all other races of men, that this Atman inhabits body after body until there is no more interest for it to continue to do so and it becomes free, not to be born again. There may be differences as to the relation between soul and God. According to one sect, the soul may be eternally different from God, according to another it may be a spark of that infinite fire, yet again according to others, it may be one with that Infinite. So long as we hold on to the basic belief that the soul is infinite, that this soul was never created, and therefore will never die, that it had to pass and evolve into various bodies, till it attained perfection in the human one, it does not matter what our interpretation is.

“And then comes the most differentiating, the grandest and the most wonderful discovery in the realm of spirituality. It is this that we hold whether we are Shaktas, Sauras or Vaishnavas, even whether we are Bauddhas or

Jainas, we all hold that soul is by its nature perfect, infinite in power and blessed ; only according to the Dualists this natural blissfulness of the soul has become contracted by past bad work, while according to the Monist even the idea of contraction is a partial mistake, it is the veil of Maya that causes us to think the soul has lost its powers but the powers are there fully manifest.

"These points are common among all the various religious sects of India and upon this common platform, conservative and liberal religionists may shake hands. Above all there is another thing to remember that religion in India means realization." (Vol. III, pp. 370-77)

Not only did the Swami consider these points of very great importance in themselves, but he held that they were necessary for the revival of Hinduism on something like a national scale. These were points that have stood and that would stand the shock of scientific discoveries, historical research and material progress. While other religions of the world were in a melting pot owing to discoveries of all kinds and the general broadening of the intellectual outlook of humanity at large, it gladdened the heart of the Swami to find that Hinduism had nothing to fear from all these. Not only did Hinduism not fear modern progress, discoveries and civilization, but it welcomed all these as affording a fresh opportunity for it to expand, and to assert its invulnerable nature. The Swami used to point out how all other religions were based on personalities and that this dependence on personalities sometimes threatened the very life of their religions. But Hinduism was based on no personality and, though it could boast of scores of grand and inspiring personalities, had nothing to lose even if all these personalities were proved by historical research to have been quite imaginary. Says the Swami :

"Except our religion, every other religion in the world depends upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. Christianity is built upon the Life of Jesus Christ, Mahommedanism upon Mahommed, Buddhism upon Buddha; Jainism upon the Jinas and so on. It naturally follows that there must be in all these religions a good deal of fight about what they call historical evidences

of these great personalities. If at any time the historical evidences about the existence of these personages in ancient times become weak, the whole building of the religion tumbles down and is broken to pieces. We escaped this fate because our religion is not based upon persons but upon principles. Krishna is not the authority of the Vedas, but the Vedas are the authority of Krishna himself. So as to the other incarnations, so with all our sages.

"This is the unique position in India and our claim is that the Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons. No religion built upon a person can be taken as a type by all the races of mankind. How is it possible that one person, a Mahomed, a Buddha, or a Christ can be taken up as the one type for the whole world? Now the Vedantic religion does not require any such personal authority. Its sanction is the eternal nature of man, its ethics are based upon the eternal spiritual solidarity of man, already existing, already attained." (Vol. III, pp. 249-51) . .

Again,

"Although we find many names, many speakers and many teachers in the Upanishads, not one verse is based upon the life of any one of them. They are simply like figures, like shadows moving in the background, unfelt, unseen, unrealised but the real force is in the marvellous, the brilliant, the effulgent text of the Upanishads, perfectly impersonal. If twenty Yajnavalkyas came and lived and died, it does not matter, the texts are there." (Vol. III, p. 332)

It was this Impersonal side of the great vedic religion that has saved it from the disasters and the disintegration that has overtaken so many other religions. And yet, as the Swami was careful enough to point out, the Vedas were not opposed to any personality because it was realised from the very ancient times that the inspiration of personalities was the easiest means of spiritually elevating the masses. Therefore one religion can very well be called an impersonal personal religion. While taking his stand on his position as an humble seeker after the truth, the

Swami always gloried in the greatness of his birth, with Hinduism as the mother Faith. Our religion has lived through all sorts of vicissitudes because we had from very ancient times held aloft the banner of renunciation. A religion of enjoyment is a religion of this earth but a religion of renunciation is religion divine. Such is Hinduism. Says the Swami:—

“*Vairagya* or renunciation is the very beginning of religion. How can morality or religion begin without renunciation itself? The Alpha and Omega is renunciation. ‘Give up’ says the Veda ‘give up’. That is the one way ‘give up’. Neither through wealth, nor through progeny, but by giving up alone is immortality to be reached. Of course there have been great givers up of the world, even sitting on the thrones, but even Janaka himself had to renounce. Who was a greater renouncer than he? If you can give up, you will have religion. If you cannot, you may read all the books that are in the world, swallow all the libraries, you are nothing. There is no spirituality. Through renunciation alone is immortality to be reached. It is the power, the great power that cares not even for the universe. Renunciation, that is the flag, the banner of India, floating over the world, the one undying through which India sends again and again as a warning to dying races, as a warning to all tyranny, as a warning to wickedness in the world. Aye, Hindus, do not let your hold on that banner go. Hold it aloft. Even if you are weak and cannot renounce, do not lower the ideal. Say ‘I am weak and cannot renounce the world,’ but do not try to be hypocrites, torturing texts, and making specious arguments and trying to throw dust in the eyes of people who ought to have known better. Do not do that but own that you are weak. For the idea is great, that of renunciation. What matters it if millions fail in the attempt, if ten soldiers, even two return victorious. Blessed be the millions dead! Their blood has brought the victory. This renunciation is the one ideal throughout the different vedic sects except one and that is the Vallabhacharya sect of the Bombay Presidency and most of you are aware of what comes when renunciation does not exist.

We want orthodoxy, even the hideously orthodox, even those who smoulder themselves with ashes, even those who stand with their hands uplifted. Aye, we want them, unnatural though they be, for standing for that idea of giving up, and acting as a warning to the race, against succumbing to the effeminate luxuries that are creeping into India, eating into our very vitals and tending to make the whole race, a race of hypocrites. We want to have a little of asceticism. Renunciation has conquered India in days of yore, it has still to conquer India. Still it stands, the greatest and highest of Indian ideals—this renunciation. The land of Buddha, the land of Ramanuja, of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, will that land give up its ideals? Certainly not.” (Vol. III, pp. 344-45)

The Swami was emphatically of opinion that it was the grand ideal of renunciation taught by Lord Buddha and his followers that was responsible for the immense prosperity and glory of India during the sixth century following the message of Buddhism. Even world's goods do not come to us unless and until we have imbibed the ideal of renunciation. The greater the spiritual and ethical ideals preached in a society, the more advanced was that society even in matters concerned with matter. Hence all that India had to do in the matter of regeneration was to imbibe and assimilate once more the gospel of renunciation and almost, as if automatically, her national glory would return to it. Why was it that while even the glories of ancient Greece and ancient Rome had been a tale of the past, Indian spiritual and national life revealed a kind of vitality that was not to be equalled by any other country under the sun? The immense vitality of India is due entirely to this great ideal and so long as we stick to this ideal we need entertain no pessimism regarding the future. And it was the ambition of the Swami to devote his great life to the preservation of this grand and glorious ideal.

The question is sometimes asked how is it that thousands and millions are the people found in every generation ready to devote themselves to this grand ideal of renunciation? What attracts them and lures them as it were on and



on, making cheerful sacrifice not only possible but positively enjoyable. It is because of the still greater and grander ideal of Realization which Hinduism has placed before itself and before the world. Great as the ideal of Renunciation is, it is nothing as compared to the still greater and grander ideal of Realization. Renunciation may be said to be the means and Realization the end, and a most glorious end too. Says the Swami:—

“Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, nor even in reasoning. It is being and becoming. Aye, my friends, until each one of you has become a Rishi and come face to face with spiritual facts, religious life has not begun for you. Until the superconscious opens for you, religion is mere talk, it is nothing but preparation. Let us say in the language of the Vedanta ‘This Atman is not to be reached by too much talk, no, not even by the highest intellect, no, not even by the study of the Vedas themselves.’ Let us speak to all the nations of the world in the language of the Vedas: ‘Vain are your fights and quarrels! Have you seen God whom you want to preach? If you have seen God, you will not quarrel, your very face will shine. When you have known God, your very face will be changed, your whole appearance will be changed. You will be a blessing to mankind.’” (Vol. III, pp. 253-54)

“Truth came to the Rishis of India and it will come to all Rishis in the future, not to talkers, nor to scholars but to seers of thought. The self is not to be reached by too much talking, not even by the highest intellects, not even by the study of the scriptures. The scriptures themselves say so. Do you find in any other scriptures such a bold assertion as that—not even by the study of the Vedas will you reach the Atman? You must open your heart. Religion is not going to church, or putting marks on your forehead or dressing in a peculiar fashion. You may paint yourself in all the colours of the rainbow, but if the heart has not been opened, if you have not realised God, it is all in vain. If one has the colour of the heart, he does not want any external colour. This is the true religious realization.” (Vol. III, pp. 282-83)

It has to be remembered that this realization is not of something external, something beyond and outside of us, something quite different in quality and nature from ourselves. No! That is not Realization! It is realization of ourselves, of our own Supreme state that is meant. The God of Hinduism is not transcendental. The God of Hinduism does not live far up somewhere beyond the clouds, in a place poetically or fancifully called Heaven. The God of Hinduism does not deal with such a second-rate godhead. No doubt for the infant and tottering intellect of man even such godhood is necessary in the first stages. No doubt for imbecile human intellect even such dualistic conception of god would prove really beneficial. But though in moments of weakness, of initial bondage, of lesser preparation, the Hindu may be content to accept a god of this type and kind, the highest flights of the ancient vedic religion would not touch such a god with the proverbial pair of tongs. What we want is not salvation but freedom. Salvation is to come from outside; freedom is to develop from inside. Salvation is a gift or a boon. Freedom means return to original state or condition. Salvation does not depend upon ourselves primarily. Freedom does so depend entirely upon ourselves. Therefore not salvation but freedom is the highest ideal which is conceivable. And this ideal humanity has received from Hinduism. That is the special contribution of our Hinduism to the world, this ideal conception of freedom instead of the usual one of salvation. The Swami proudly dwells upon this theme with his usual penetration. Says he:—

“Aye, this is the one scripture in the world, of all others, that does not talk of salvation but of freedom. Be free from the bonds of nature, be free from weakness! And it shows to you that you have this freedom already in you. You are a Dvaitist; never mind, you have got to admit that by its very nature the soul is perfect. Only by certain actions of the soul has it become contracted. Indeed, Ramanuja's theory of contraction and expansion is exactly what the modern evolutionists called Evolution and Atavism. The soul goes back, becomes contracted as it were, its powers become potential, and by good deeds and good

thoughts, it expands again and reveals its natural perfection. Advaitist admits evolution in nature and not in soul. Not that the Self can by any means be made to contract. It is unchangeable, the Infinite One. It was covered, as it were, with a veil, the veil of Maya and as this Maya veil becomes thinner and thinner, the inborn, natural glory of the Soul comes out and becomes more manifest. This is the one great doctrine which the world is waiting to learn from India." (Vol. III, pp. 238-39)

According to the Swami there was a world of difference between salvation and freedom, when these ideals are practically applied to the need of any society. Since salvation is to come from outside, all reform movements in societies where the ideal of salvation predominates are more or less artificial movements. The woman's movement, the movement for the betterment of the lower classes, of wild tribes as well as of prisoners, etc., aim at forcing moral and other education upon the less fortunate folk in the belief that the elevation is to come from outside. How misdirected these movements can be is patent to all and the reason lies here. But with that these people have nothing to do. Swamiji, however, though the greatest and intensest worker, had nothing in common with those fanatical crew whose creed is exclusiveness. Swamiji thought that true religion is never exclusive, that its real note is liberalism and toleration. Swamiji considered this to be a characteristic of our Hindu Religion. He thought that unless we have the true liberal spirit we shall not be able to expand, which was a sign of life, of progress, of growth. In the present days of strife, all over the world, Hinduism has to keep its head erect, the only thing it has to do is to expand. The moment we cease from expanding, we begin to contract, to become frogs in the well. India's fate, the Swami thought, was sealed when the restriction of sea voyage was forced upon us. But now it is necessary for us to expand and to grow. Says the Swami:—

"At the same time we must not forget that we have also to teach a great lesson to the world. We cannot do without the world outside India; it was our foolishness

that we thought we could, and we have paid the penalty by about a thousand years of slavery. That we did not go out to compare things with other nations, did not mark the workings that have been all around us, has been the one great cause of this degradation of the Indian mind. We have paid the penalty, let us do it no more. All such foolish ideas that Indians must not go out of India are childish. They must be knocked on the head. The more you go out and travel among the nations of the world, the better for you and for your country. If you had done that for hundreds of years past you would not be here to-day, at the feet of every nation that wants to rule India. The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of the revival of national life, expansion. This reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off and thousands will be thrown off in that way. This question therefore is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life, and through this expansion, our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our part of the upheaval of the world is going out to the external world. Each nation must give in order to live. When you give your life, you will have life. When you receive you must pay it by giving to all others, and that we have been living for so many thousands of years is a fact that stares us in the face, and the solution that remains is that we have been always giving to the outside world, whatever the ignorant may feel." (Vol. III, pp. 272-73)

Again and again Swamiji pointed out with pride that Vedanta is the only religion that is not afraid of modern science and modern research. While other religions were afraid of the encroachments of these, Swamiji's heart swelled with satisfaction to find that thousands of years ago, sages in Indian forests conceived thoughts which are standing the test and scrutiny of modern science and modern research. The conclusions of modern science are identical with the conclusions of Vedanta; not only that; Vedanta has in many cases, anticipated the conclusions of modern

science which it has left far behind. In these and many other respects Hinduism was supreme.

With this general introduction to Swamiji's thoughts on Hinduism or vedic religion, let us study in greater detail his views on the different Yogas.

## CHAPTER III

### BHAKTIYOGA

The way Godward is straight and narrow. It passes through groves of purity, control and discrimination. It is lined on both sides with trees of application and perseverance and then it branches off in four directions ; these four sub-ways no doubt lead to the same place but each presents a distinct variety of windings and natural scenery which is not to be met with on any other. Rajayoga, Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Jnanayoga are all yogas, paths spiritual, wending their course Godward, but each of these yogas has distinct characteristics not to be met with in any other yoga ; and with the distinctness of its characteristics, it has naturally a distinctness of appeal. In spite of the laudable attempt of the author of the Gita to expound each yoga in terms which will harmonize with the essence of every other yoga, it will have to be admitted that each yoga appeals to different individuals and is based on the special development of different sets of mental characteristics and qualities. Therefore to superimpose this or that yoga upon any person is extremely unreasonable. If the goal and destination of each yoga is identical, why this fanatical insistence on this or that path ? Why not state the nature of each path and allow the individual maximum liberty to make his own choice ? Why not trust to every man's natural instinct ? Why not allow full freedom to every aspiring soul ? If spiritual freedom or liberation is the goal of religion, why shackle humanity with rules and preferences that will limit their choice and act prejudicially to that very freedom which is the goal of every mortal as well as religion ? Why not let things adjust themselves ? These are some of the questions that occur to an observant mind at the contemplation of Hindu religious thought in general.

Take for instance the case of Bhaktiyoga which the Swami has beautifully defined as 'a real genuine search after the Lord, a search, beginning, continuing and ending in love'. If Bhaktiyoga is the religion of love it follows

it can have its appeal more to emotional than to rationalistic people, more to sentimental than to active people. Before we superimpose any particular yoga on anybody, it is our duty to find whether his mental composition and organism would harmonize with the disciplines of that yoga. Otherwise it will all be so much effort wasted.

If we carefully study the Gita we shall find that the origin of Bhaktiyoga is overlaid with sacrificial worship. The pure and limpid stream of Bhakti passes through a valley one side of which is sacrificial worship and the other religious philosophy. Ritual on the one hand and philosophy on the other have obscured the real problems of Bhakti. The Bhakti of the Gita is not the sweet sentimental abandon of the Bhagvat Purana but a something which comes under and can be included in Jnana. The six chapters (7th to 12th) of the Gita which give us the Gita-view of Bhakti are disagreeably overloaded with philosophy, so much so that certain commentators have said that only the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth chapters are devoted to Bhakti and that too partially while the seventh and eighth are devoted to Jnana. And the ninth chapter itself opens with a statement that Bhakti (yoga) was a kind of new Jnana. We can well believe that about the time of the Gita, Bhakti had gradually come to be recognized as a separate path but had not yet attained, to use a legal phrase, 'the age of majority'. As time passed, these special elements and features of Bhakti got more and more recognition and the cult of Bhakti developed quite independently of the lines originally laid down in the Gita. What a contrast between the Bhagvat Purana and the Bhagvat Gita in the treatment and delineation of Bhakti.

For several centuries since the publication of the Bhagvat Purana, Bhaktiyoga has been claiming and monopolizing the attention of the masses in India. It is only recently that the Karmayoga is setting itself up as the religion of the century. Saints and prophets have arisen who have declared that Bhakti is the religion most appropriate to the Kaliyuga. Neither the flights of Jnana-yoga nor the intricacies of Rajayoga have their appeal to

men and women of average capacity and efficiency. For their special benefit the school of Bhakti has arisen.

Once it was called upon to devote itself to the needs of the masses all that entered Bhaktiyoga can very well be understood. The doctrine of blind faith has been a fruitful source of mischief but persons whose intellect is not properly developed can hardly be expected to go into the pros and cons of complex questions. The mass mentality is so to speak soldiers' mentality. Neither wants reason, argument or persuasion. Both have to be employed in action. Both are obedient to orders. The need of *sad-guru* became a principal point in the school of Bhakti and it has been dinned into our ears that 'without the lead of the *sadguru*, the journey is bound to be futile'.

All the same it has to be admitted that in the average man the germs of love and devotion are to be found in greater proportion. Bhaktiyoga is essentially the Yoga of love. We are all lovers more or less. As husbands and wives, as children and parents, as brothers and sisters, in all sorts of our social relations we traffic in love. But do we know that there is divinity in this love? Do we know that this love, if properly developed, is something that will take us Godward? Swami Vivekananda welcomed from the spiritual standpoint every manifestation of love. To him love of whatever kind, degree and intensity, was an emotion to be encouraged, to be made the best use of, to be nurtured with all the tenderness, delicacy and care one is capable of. Says he :—

"Wherever there is love, it is He the Lord is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss. Where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss. Where friends clasp hands, He the Lord is present as the God of Love. When a great man loves and wishes to help the mankind, He is there giving all his bounty out of His love to mankind. Wherever the heart expands, He is there manifested."

So then Bhaktiyoga is essentially the religion of the heart. How often do we plume upon our noble intellect and despise the virtues and greatness of the heart! We falsely imagine that the intellect is everything and that



the heart is nothing or next to nothing. But this is a great mistake. In matters spiritual it is the heart that counts ; intellect is not everything. The greater number of the world's prophets have been almost invariably men of heart. It is the heart, feeling, emotion that leads a man to salvation. It is the motor power that propels a man's *Samskaras* to purification and perfection. Swami Vivekananda was a genius and could be expected to stretch a point if possible in favour of the intellect. And yet even he has preferred the heart. Says he :—

“It is through the heart that the Lord is seen ! What is in the intellect ? It goes a few steps and there it stops ! Through the heart comes inspiration. Feel like Christ and you will be Christ, feel like Buddha and you will be Buddha.”

With the rare insight of genius, Swamiji was perfectly aware both of the strength and the weakness of Bhakti. Says he :—

“The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view ; its great disadvantage is that, in its lower forms, it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical creed in Hinduism, or Mahommedanism or Christianity have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower plane of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment to a loved object without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal, *i.e.* by hating every other ideal. This kind of love is somewhat like the canine instinct of guarding the master's property from intrusion. Again, the fanatic loses all power of judgment. The same man, who is kind, good, honest and loving to people of his own opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds, when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood.” (Vol. III, pp. 32-3)

Fierce controversies have raged over the comparative merits of Jñāna and Bhakti. The Bhaktas, *i.e.* the extreme partisans of the school of Bhakti, hold that the highest

state of realization comes through love and devotion alone and triumphantly quote Lord Shri Krishna in the Gita. 'Through Bhakti alone, Bhakti, single-minded and pure, can I be realized, seen and entered.' This immersion of the individual soul into the universal is possible through Bhakti only. The *Jnanis* on the contrary point out that the highest state of Para Bhakti after all gives Jnana and that Jnana is the goal of all humanity. This age-long controversy between the Jnani and the Bhakta can never be ended so long as both of them talk from the lower plane. It is imperfection that always quarrels. Perfection is at peace. The true Bhakta or the true Jnani will never carry on wranglings and controversies. Swami Vivekananda held very decided opinions on this question. To him any controversies on this point appeared not only meaningless but perfectly mischievous. Says he :—

"There is a little difference in opinion between the teachers of knowledge and those of Love, though both admit the power of Bhakti. The Jnanis hold Bhakti to be an instrument of liberation, the Bhaktas look upon it both as the instrument and the thing to be attained. To my mind this is a distinction without much difference. In fact Bhakti, when used as an instrument, really means a lower form of worship and the higher form becomes inseparable from the lower form of realization at a later stage. Each seems to lay a great stress upon his own peculiar method of worship, forgetting that, with perfect love, true knowledge is bound to come, even unsought, and that from perfect knowledge true love is inseparable." (Vol. III, p. 34)

Bhaktiyoga deals very little with philosophy. It has no patience with what it calls argumentative jugglery. 'What is the use of all this ratiocination?' asks the Bhakta. Will argument resolve our doubts? Reason is no substitute for realization. Let us pitch our demands higher and try to enter into the inner sanctuary of the Lord. But though thus the Bhakta neglects philosophy and argumentation, he is very keen on ceremonials, rituals, worship, form, etc., all of which form the kindergarten of religion. The Bhakta is peculiarly susceptible to the influence of these. These he prizes as his heart's blood. In these days when cere-

monials and rituals are discredited, and reason and argument are honoured, an attempt is made to give the go by to all the poetic element in the school of Bhakti. But the attempts have only recoiled on those who made them. Those sects which demolished ceremonials and rituals failed to attract crowds and impress the masses at large. Swami Vivekananda was emphatically of opinion that while the paraphernalia of Bhakti deserved to be overhauled, it was madness pure and simple to make radical alterations and deprive the tender plant of Bhakti of much of the support which it gets from ritualism and mythology. Says he :—

“In the preparatory stage, we invariably and unavoidably stand in need of many concrete helps to enable us to get on; and, indeed, the mythological and symbolical parts of all religions are natural growths which early environ the aspiring soul and help it Godward. It is also a significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism. The dry fanatical forms of religion which attempt to eradicate all that is poetical, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Godward way—the forms which attempt to break down the very ridgepoles of the spiritual roofs and in their ignorant and superstitious conceptions of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative material to the spiritual plant growing in the human soul—such forms of religion too often find that all that is left to them is but an empty shell, a contentless frame of words and sophistry. The vast mass of those whose religion is like this, are conscious or unconscious materialists. Show us one, but one gigantic genius growing out of all this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism; and if you cannot close your mouths, open the windows of your hearts to the clear light of truth and sit like children at the feet of the sages of India.” ( Vol. III, p. 44 )

Swamiji is very particular that, unless there is the aid of the Guru, no aspirant can make any appreciable progress in the path Godward. The Guru not only points the way

but he leads his disciple on. The actual aid and assistance which a Guru renders to his disciple is so substantial and of so direct and positive a kind, that the Swami is convinced that none can rise spiritually without a Guru's inspiration and aid. Those who know what substantial part Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa played in the spiritual development of his favoured disciple will not be astonished at Swamiji's insistence on this point. The contribution of Shri Ramakrishna in the building up of Vivekananda's spiritual life was so substantial, that the latter knew not what he could have done without his Master. Says he:—

“In the vast majority of cases, such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher qualities and the possibilities of the soul are quickened, growth is animated and a man becomes holy and perfect in the end. It is a mysterious law of nature that as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious soul must and does appear to help that soul. To the human soul, the lotus of whose inner holy shrine is already quick with life, the light which causes the beautiful opening out of this lotus comes always from the wise and good teacher. Without faith, humility, submission and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teachers, there cannot be any growth in us; and it is significant that where this kind of relation between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men have been produced; while in those countries, which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, spiritual men become almost an unknown quantity. Religion, which is the highest knowledge and the highest wisdom, cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from books. You may thrust yourself in all the corners of the world, you may explore the Alps, the Himalayas and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea and pry into every nook of the Tibet and desert of the Gobi, you will not find it anywhere until your heart is ready for receiving it and your teacher has come. And when that divinely appointed teacher comes, serve him with childlike confidence and simplicity, freely open your heart to his influence and see in him God manifested. Those who come to seek Truth in such a

spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things regarding Truth, Goodness and Beauty." (Vol. III, pp. 46, 50 & 52)

The very first question that occurs to a thoughtful mind in the consideration of the gospel of Bhakti is the place of image-worship in the path of love and devotion. Mahommedanism and Protestant Christianity have condemned image-worship as something crude and degrading. To the average critic of image-worship, the debasement by a thinking and intelligent man before some clay or wooden image by offering to it flowers, incense, etc., is something which ought to be stopped forthwith. Put in this manner, the argument does seem irresistible. But it is unfair to put the argument the way it is advanced. Now it is well recognized that the conception of God is very difficult even for highly trained minds to grasp and if the substitution of some convenient image helps the almost childlike human intellect to grasp some features and attributes of the Almighty, there seems to be no harm if such are used. We don't mind the means, if the end is served. What the critics of image-worship mistake is that they regard the image as God which it is not. The Bhakta for the sake of his convenience and benefit regards God as the image for the time being. The mistake would be if he regards the image as God. There is a world of difference between the image as God and God as the image. The conception of various gods and deities in Hindu mythology is also based on the need of the human mind to have something concrete to enable it to stand and walk. Thus, for instance, Ganapati is the God of intellect; Maruti stands for strength; the Sun stands for light, life and vitality, and so on. Moral attributes and physical qualities, concretised and joined to local colouring, have been responsible for much or most of the Hindu mythology. The question arises what, in these days of over-wisdom, we are to do with these. Swamiji's views on image-worship and use of *pratika* in general are very refreshing and convincing. Says he:—

"One thing has to be carefully borne in mind. If, as it may happen in some cases, the highly philosophic ideal, supreme Brahman, is Himself dragged down by

*pratika*-worship to the level of the *pratika* and the *pratika* itself is taken to be the Atman of the worshipper, the worshipper gets entirely misled as no *pratika* can really be the Atman of the worshipper. But where Brahman Himself is the object of worship and the *pratika* stands only as the substitute or suggestion thereof, that is to say, where through the *pratika*, the Omnipresent Brahman is worshipped—the *pratika* itself being idealised into the cause of all, the Brahman, the worship is positively beneficial. Nay, it is absolutely necessary for all mankind, until they have all got beyond the primary or preparatory state of mind in regard to worship.” ( Vol. III, p. 60 )

The Swami can easily demolish the objection of Mahommedans and Protestant Christians by turning the tables against them. Says he:—

“ The same ideas apply to the worship of the *pratimas* as to that of the *pratikas*; that is to say, if the image stands for a god or a saint, the worship is not the result of Bhakti and does not lead to liberation; but if it stands for the one God, the worship thereof will bring both Bhakti and Mukti. Of the principal religions of the world we see Vedantism, Buddhism and certain forms of Christianity freely using images; only two religions, Mahommedanism and Protestantism, refuse such help. Yet the Mahommedans use the graves of their saints and martyrs almost in the place of images. And the Protestants in rejecting all concrete help to religion are drifting away every year farther and farther from spirituality till at present there is scarcely any difference between the advanced Protestants and the followers of August Comte or the Agnostics who preach ethics alone. Again, in Christianity and Mahommedanism, whatever exists of image-worship is made to fall under that category under which the *Pratika* or *Pratima* is worshipped in itself but not as a help to the vision of God. Therefore it is at best only of the nature of ritualistic karmas, and cannot produce either Bhakti or Mukti. In this form of image-worship, the allegiance of the soul is given to other things than Ishvara and therefore such use of images and graves, of temples and tombs is real idolatry.” ( Vol. III, p. 61 )

Equally important is the question of the chosen ideal—*Ishta*—in the Yoga of love and devotion. The same principle which guides us in the matter of image-worship or symbol-worship, ought to give us a lead here also. An average man of average time, energy, enthusiasm and inclination cannot be expected to be versatile; we cannot expect him to show superior adaptability, an all round appreciation, a uniform liking for varying ideals. We cannot expect a man to worship Krishna, the God of love and Shiva the God of spirituality and renunciation simultaneously. A man has to find his own liking and inclination and then choose his *Ishta* accordingly. The choice of the *Ishta* to a large extent is to determine the future path we are going to tread and will largely be itself determined by the previous bent of our mind. It is far more difficult to select our *Ishta* than, say, to select the colour of our coat. It demands a world of introspection and correct self-examination which is so very rare in the average man; and that is why many people are called upon to wander in the wilderness. With proper self-analysis, expert guidance and the like, it is possible to select a suitable *Ishta* and then the progress to the goal is very rapid indeed. Swamiji's views about *Ishta-Nishtha* are as usual very penetrating. Says he:—

“One who aspires to be a Bhakta must know that so many opinions are so many ways. He must know that all the various sects of the various religions are the various manifestations of the glory of the same Lord. The Bhakta must take care not to hate nor even to criticize those radiant sons of light who are the founders of various sects. Very few, indeed, are those who are at once the possessors of an extensive sympathy and power of appreciation as well as an intensity of love. We find as a rule that liberal and sympathetic sects lose the intensity of religious feeling and, in their hands, religion is apt to degenerate into a kind of politico-social club life. On the other hand, intensely narrow sectaries, while displaying a very commendable love of their own ideals are seen to have acquired every particle of that love by hating everyone who is not of exactly the same opinions as themselves. Would to God that this world was full of men who were as intense

in their love as worldwide in their sympathies. Yet we know that it is practicable to educate large numbers of human beings into the ideal of a wonderful blending of both the width and the intensity of love; and the way to do that is by this path of the *Ishta-Nishtha* or the 'chosen ideal'. Every sect of every religion presents only one ideal of its own to mankind, but the eternal Vedantic religion opens to mankind an infinite number of doors for ingress into the inner shrine of Divinity and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the Eternal One. With the kindest solicitude, the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads, hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life, by the glorious sons or human manifestations of God in the past and in the present and stands with out-stretched arms to welcome all to that Home of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss, wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of Maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and eternal joy." ( Vol. III, pp. 62-63)

"Bhaktiyoga, therefore, lays on us the imperative command not to hate or deny any one of the various paths that lead to salvation. Yet the growing plant must be hedged round to protect it till it has grown into a tree. The tender plant of spirituality will die if exposed too early to the action of a constant change of ideas and ideals. Many people, in the name of what may be called religious liberalism, may be seen feeding their idle curiosity with a continuous succession of different ideals. With them hearing new things grows into a kind of disease, a sort of religious drink mania. Religion with these is a sort of intellectual opium-eating and there it ends. This *Eka-Nishtha* or devotion to one ideal is absolutely necessary for the beginner in the practice of religious devotion. He must say with Hanuman in the Ramayana—"Though I know that the Lord of Sri and the Lord of Janaki are one and the same manifestation of the supreme being, yet my all in all is the lotus-eyed Rama." (Vol. III, pp. 63-4)

✓ Long and interminable is the procession of ceremonials, worship and rituals. The Bhakta embraces all of them



with a view to purify his mind. To cleanse the mind of its dross, to turn it Godward, to withdraw it from objects of senses, to concentrate it on the chosen Ideal, all these efforts receive great stimulation from worship and ceremonials. That is why we find these recommended in all texts on Bhaktiyoga. That is why even the greatest saints have not despised them but have continued them even after their utility was served. That is why *Achara* is considered to be the first step in religion. But while doing all these things we must not forget that their value is nothing as compared to those supreme virtues whose preparatory stage they deserve to become. They cannot replace the virtues of *Para-Bhakti*. After all no lower type of *sadhana* can take the place of renunciation. They may give us the foretaste of renunciation but they cannot usurp its place. What is Bhakti without renunciation? What are worship and ceremonials if they do not develop into renunciation? Renunciation is the touchstone for all lower types of *Sadhanas*. Says the Swami :—

“All these preparations are intended only for the purification of the soul. The repetitions of names, the rituals, the forms, the symbols, all these various things are for the purification of the soul. The greatest purifier among all such things, a purifier without which no one can enter the regions of Para Bhakti,—higher devotion—is renunciation. This frightens many, yet without it there cannot be any spiritual growth. When the human soul draws back from the things of the world and tries to go into deeper things, when man, the spirit which is here somehow being concretised and materialised, understands that he is thereby going to be destroyed and to be reduced almost into mere matter and turns his face away from matter,—then begins renunciation, then begins real spiritual growth.”

But though this renunciation is necessary and even inevitable, we shrink from it as we shrink from a cup of poison. It is a bitter pill and we either refuse to take it or take it with such evident distaste as to reduce all grace of its taking to nullity and the problem before all religious prophets has been how to sugarcoat this bitter

pill. The Karmayogi, the Jnanayogi, the Rajayogi have each in their way tried their best to prove that this pill of renunciation is after all not so very bitter. As regards its efficacy, there is no difference of opinion. The question is how to induce the patient to take it. The Karmayogi renounces the fruit of all action and thus, not being attached to the result, attains renunciation. The Rajayogi knows that the whole of nature is intended for the soul to acquire experience and that the result of all experiences of the soul is for it to become aware of its eternal separateness from nature. The human soul has to understand and realize that it has been spirit and not matter through eternity. So the Rajayogi learns the lesson of renunciation through his own experience of nature. The Jnanayogi regards that the whole of this world is an illusion. He understands that every manifestation of power in nature belongs to the soul and not to nature. By sheer force of rational conviction he tears himself away from nature. All these methods of renunciation have their own value no doubt, but the renunciation of Bhakti is the easiest renunciation of all. Says the Swami:—

“Of all renunciations, the most natural, so to speak, is that of the Bhaktiyogi. Here there is no violence, nothing to give up, nothing to tear off, as it were, from ourselves, nothing from which we have violently to separate ourselves. The Bhakta's renunciation is easy, smooth, flowing and as natural as the things around us. When the moon shines brightly, all the stars become dim, and when the sun shines, the moon herself becomes dim. The renunciation necessary for the attainment of Bhakti is not obtained by killing anything but just comes in as naturally as in the presence of an increasingly stronger light, the less intense ones become dimmer and dimmer until they vanish away completely. So this love of the pleasures of senses and of the intellect is all made dim, and thrown aside and cast into the shade by the love of God Himself. Forms vanish, rituals fly away, books are superseded, images, temples, churches, religions and sects fall off by their own nature from him who knows this love of God. Nothing remains to bind him or fetter his freedom. A

ship, all of a sudden comes near a magnetic rock and its iron bolts and bars are all attracted and drawn out, and the planks get loosened and freely float on water. Divine grace thus loosens the binding bolts and bars of the soul and it becomes free. The Bhakta has not to suppress any single one of his emotions, he only strives to intensify them and direct them towards God." (Vol. III, pp. 72-3)

So then it is not the suppression of any single emotion but the turning it Godward that enables the Bhakta to attain renunciation. We find that even in this clinging life of ours we are capable of making the highest sacrifices where even our mundane love is concerned. In our day to day life, we make huge sacrifices for the sake of our wife, mother or child. What is this due to? Do we love pain or discomfort? No! But we love these dear ones more and that is why we make the most wonderful sacrifices for them. More! We undergo all this sacrifice with the greatest cheerfulness. Why? Why should we feel cheerful, glad, even proud when we are undergoing all sorts of mental or physical sufferings for the sake of our dear ones? Because that is willing sacrifice! Because that is willing renunciation, and it is this willingness that adds zest to it.

So then our love makes us willing and our willingness gives us power to suffer, to renounce. If love for wife, mother, or child is capable of making us so heroic, how many times more heroic we can be if we make sacrifices for the country, or higher still for God? The Bhakta sacrifices himself for God and, therefore, this sacrifice and renunciation evokes in him no feelings of reluctance; cheerfully, in a rhetorical sense, he throws himself before a canon!

✓ Therefore this emotion of love has to be developed with the greatest care. It is the Bhakta's greatest asset. He does not care for anything else. All virtues are included in this. The Swami holds that love of every kind, variety and degree has in it something Divine. It is gold dust, even the lowest manifestation of Love. But take away the alloy therefrom and it will shine with supreme resplendence! Says the Swami:—

"Wherever there is any bliss, even though in the most sensual of things, there is a spark of the Eternal Bliss which is the Lord Himself. Even in the lowest kinds of attractions, there is the germ of divine love. One of the names of the Lord in Sanskrit is Hari and this means that He attracts all things to Himself. His is in fact the only attraction worthy of human hearts. Who can attract a soul really? Only He! Do you think dead matter can truly attract the soul? It never did and never will! When you see a man going after a beautiful face, do you think it is handful of the arranged material molecules which really attracts the man? Not at all! Behind those material particles there must be and is the play of divine influence and divine love! So even the lowest forms of attraction derive their power from God Himself. 'None, oh beloved, ever loved the husband for the husband's sake. It is the Atman, the Lord who is within, for whose sake the husband is loved. The Lord is the great magnet and we are like iron filings. We are being constantly attracted by him and all of us are struggling to reach Him.'" (Vol. III, pp. 74-5)

But though there may be a little sacredness, sometimes even inverted sacredness in these petty loves, the Bhakta does not waste his time over them, but goes straight to the main love, which is the love of God. The mighty attraction for the Lord makes all other lower attractions vanish for him. Why should he go for bath to a pond when the mighty stream of the Divine is before him? When this mighty infinite love of God enters his heart, can there be any space left for love of any other kind? Bhakti fills his heart with the divine waters of the ocean of love which is God Himself. There is no place there for little loves.

✓ This love transforms the whole world for us. It purifies every emotion. It removes dross from our mind and helps us to attain renunciation in no time. Says the Swami :—

"In Bhaktiyoga, the central secret is to know that the various passions and feelings and emotions in the human heart are not wrong in themselves, only they have to be carefully controlled and given a higher and higher

direction until they attain the very highest condition of excellence. The highest direction is that which takes us to God: every other direction is lower. We find that pleasures and pains are very common and oft-recurring feelings in our lives. When a man feels pain, because he has not wealth or some such worldly thing, he is giving a wrong direction to the feelings. Still pain has its uses. Let a man feel pain that he has not reached the highest, that he has not reached God, and that pain will be his salvation. When you are glad that you have a handful of coins, it is a wrong direction given to the faculty of joy; it should be given a higher direction, it must be made to serve the highest Ideal. Pleasure in that kind of Ideal must surely be our highest joy. The Bhakta says that not one of our emotions is wrong, he gets hold of them all and points them unfailingly towards God." (Vol. III, pp. 78-9)

What, it may be asked, is the distinction between Jnana and Bhakti? Does Jnana evolve in Bhakti or does Bhakti culminate in Jnana? Which is the prior and which the final stage? Which is the cause and which is the effect? On this point, as we have seen, Sages have differed from times immemorial. Does the path of emotion lead to the same goal as the path of reason? The Gita seems to preach that the lower Bhakti is the cause of Jnana and Higher Jnana finally culminates in Highest Bhakti. In other words Bhakti is the cause of Jnana which in its turn culminates in Higher Bhakti. To vary the phraseology, the author of the Gita seems to hold that Jnana leads us to the portals of the Inner sanctuary of the temple of God but the right of entering that inner sanctuary rests with Bhakti alone! To us it seems that both Jnana and Bhakti are essentially the same, Jnana is ice and Bhakti is water. Bhakti is liquefied Jnana; Jnana is solidified Bhakti. The ice of Jnana can change into the water of Bhakti; but the water of Bhakti too can be compressed into the ice of Jnana. This similitude makes both Jnana and Bhakti stand on the same level and does not force us to resort to the Gita dodge of making lower Bhakti the cause of Jnana and higher

Jnana the cause of Highest Bhakti. This statement in spite of the clever way in which it is put seems in essence to prefer Bhakti to Jnana of which it is the fruition. But the similitude of ice and water would make each the cause of the other. Both are causes, both are results. Whether this is the cause or that is the result can be determined only by examining individual manifestations of Jnana and Bhakti. No universal hard and fast rule can be laid down in this connection.

The Swami says "The Upanishads distinguish between a higher knowledge and a lower knowledge, and to the Bhakta there is really no difference between this higher knowledge and his higher love. The Devi Bhagvat gives us this definition of Para Bhakti 'As oil poured from vessel to another falls in an unbroken line, so when the mind in an unbroken stream, thinks of the Lord, we have what is called Para Bhakti.' This kind of undisturbed and ever ready direction of the mind and heart to the Lord with an inseparable attachment is indeed the highest manifestation of man's love to God. When this supreme love once comes into the heart of man, his mind will continuously think of God and remember nothing else." (Vol. III, pp. 85-6)

The central point in this yoga of love has been very beautifully put by the Swami. He says: "We may represent love as a triangle, each of the angles of which corresponds to one of the characteristics. There can be no triangle without its three angles. There can be no true love without its three following characteristics. The first angle of our triangle of love is that love knows no bargaining. Wherever there is any seeking for something in return, there can be no real love. It becomes a matter of mere shopkeeping. As long as there is in us any idea of deriving this or that favour from God in return for our respect and allegiance to him, so long there can be no true love growing in our heart. The second angle of the triangle of love is that love knows no fear. Those that love God through fear are the lowest of human beings, quite undeveloped as men. God is a great being to them, with a whip in one hand and sceptre in another. It is a

degradation to worship God through fear of punishment. Love conquers all fear; love and fear are incompatibles. The third angle in the triangle of love is that love knows no rival; for in it is always embodied the lover's highest ideal. True love never comes until the object of our love becomes to us the highest ideal. The highest ideal of every man is God. The synthesis of all the highest ideals of beauty, of sublimity, and of power, gives us the completest conception of the loving and lovable God. All the active manifestations of human nature are struggles of those ideals to become realized in practical life." (Vol. III, pp. 88-9)

The Swami thus concludes his discourses on Bhakti-yoga. He says: "We all have to begin as Dualists in the religion of love. God is to us a separate being and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle, and man begins to approach God and God also comes nearer and nearer to man. Man takes up all the various relationships of life as father, as mother, as son, as friend, as master, as lover, and projects them in his ideal of love on his God. To him God exists as all these and the last point of his progress is reached when he feels that he has become absolutely merged in the object of his worship. We all begin with love for ourselves, and the unfair claims of the little self make even love selfish. At last, however, comes the full blaze of light in which this little self is seen to have become one with the Infinite. Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this light of love, and he realizes at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover, and the Beloved are one." (Vol. III, p. 100)

## CHAPTER IV

### JNANAYOGA

Of all yogas, Rajayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Karmayoga and Jnanayoga, Jnanayoga makes the greatest demands upon its votary and is the greatest though most difficult to practise. The Gita beautifully opens with a narration of the mental struggle of Arjuna who, at the contemplation of the impending massacre of his near and dear friends, relatives and kinsmen, decided to prefer inaction to this bloody action. Naturally the talk gravitated to the comparative merits of action and inaction and Lord Krishna was quick to point out to Arjuna that action does not always mean bondage and that inaction does not always lead to knowledge. The mental confusion of Arjuna was due probably to the fact that since knowledge is the goal of mankind, several philosophers prefer the direct path of knowledge instead of the indirect path which leads us through action. The light of the Jnanayogi falls direct like the light of the sun, whereas the light of the man of action falls indirectly inasmuch as it is the action in the real sense of the word that gives knowledge and light. The man of thought attains the very highest by sheer force and perfection of the ratiocinating force; the man of action gets at knowledge through transfused action. Since the man of thought lays greater stress on ratiocination, he appears idle and inactive, while the man of Karmayoga spends his life in a storm of work which being efficiently and skilfully done results in knowledge hence appears active. And this superficial distinction between them of seeming action of the one and the seeming inaction of the other is seized hold of by Arjuna to justify his temporary and unreasoning preference for inaction. But the Jnanayogi does not lead really a life of inaction. His is the greatest activity because he is the only man who is thoroughly true to his convictions to which he tries to live up. Philosophically speaking he cannot be said to be inactive; and if he does not join in the fool's game that is played by and in society, the fault is not his.



Any stick serves to beat a dog with and the most frequent, though most irrational, argument used against a Jnanayogi is that even he is forced to do some action or other. So long as the soul is held up in this prison of matter, it goes without saying that the cravings of the matter for food and the like have to be satisfied and if this action is to condemn the Jnanayogi, he gives his opponent the satisfaction of his triumph. If the unconscious and semiconscious functions of the body like breathing, digestion and the like, as also the conscious and deliberate actions of eating, drinking, exercise, conversation, etc., are to be held to bind a man to action always and in all spheres of his life, then good bye to all argument and discussion. An epigram must never be raised to the level of an argument; a witty and humorous sentence uttered in the midst of heated discussion gives a healthy turn to the discussion and reduces the heat of the controversy, but that sentence too has no place in the formulation of the argument; and those Karmayogis who seek to win dialectical victory over the Jnanayogi by resort to such puerile arguments may as well cease continuing the discussion.

The position of the Jnanayogi is perfectly simple and easily understandable. He knows the limits of a life of reason; he knows the needs imposed upon him by the law of flesh. But he knows the ideal, he wants to live up to it and has the necessary intrepidity, self-control, mental equanimity, perseverance and other like qualities for the arduous task. He wants to restrict his sphere of action to the narrowest limits and then he wants to give himself up wholly to thought and meditation as a means of attaining the Highest and the Everlasting.

Even in the limited sphere of action which is forced upon every mortal by the law of flesh, he witnesses the perpetual play of the three *Gunas*, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Whatever actions emerge from the action and interaction of these three elemental forces, he attributes to their proper cause and hence is not attached. 'I do nothing' says he, and the 'I' is doubly capital. 'I am the witness, the seer, the observer, the undetached! Let the forces of the body seek their minimum need and gratification. It is

no concern of mine! I am free, I am unattached.' That is what he says.

Having thus given unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's due, he enters into the realm of thought with a reverence and sense of holiness that augurs well for his future success. To him thought is not a means of earning livelihood, or spending an idle moment with, but of attaining the highest. The sheer sacredness of his approach to Truth makes away with the necessity of going through the drill of Karma Kanda. For has he not accustomed himself to co-ordinate his physical existence with the light of the highest thought? It is this thought which gives him the proper poise when passing through the course of his life.

What is all sin, all temptation, all anger, all greed but unrefined thought, thought which is of such a low quality as to be almost synonymous with the cravings of the senses? Will any man do evil if he has ceased to think evil? Will a man live on a low plane in life if his thoughts have accustomed him to ethereal heights? Thought control, thought purification, thought co-ordination—will these allow a man to live the life of a beast or even worse? It is because the influence of thought on life is not properly appreciated that we blame all thought and recklessly pit all our hopes on action, which really is the fruition of thought, at once its cause and effect.

The first step in a life of exalted thought is to co-ordinate thought with higher ethics. After this is done comes the subtler question of thought control with special reference to the subtler and more refined, and hence less perceptible, drawings of the minds to the senses. In a sense the co-ordination of thought even with higher ethics forms a part of this subject, but it can be easily differentiated as being the more manifestable. The mind must maintain its poise and equilibrium not only between the pairs of merit and sin, virtue and vice, which all come under the category of higher ethics, but also between the pairs of heat and cold, happiness and misery, honour and censure. These pairs too like the pairs of virtue and sin and the like, have to deal with the drawings of the mind towards the senses, but in the case of the latter, the drawings of the mind form

essentially an ethical question while in the case of the former, they form an essentially subtler and more refined struggle which has nothing whatever to do with the canons of ethics. It is here that the Jnanayogi has to struggle most, longest, and most perseveringly. His life becomes a perpetual denial of what is ordinarily lived, sensed, felt and willed. Here the Bhakta has no struggle or difficulty, even the Karmayogi is on more comfortable ground. But the difficulty of the Jnanayogi is just like the difficulty of the man who is called upon to eat only proteins. The charm of the average dinner lies in the harmonious blending of nitrogenous substances with other ingredients of food. But when the task of eating only proteins falls to the lot of the diner, his difficulty can well be realised. Similar is the difficulty of the Jnanayogi, the man of thought, knowledge and illumination. He has to live the life of ideal thought, a life in which every sense impression, no sooner it is produced and registered, is to be denied and obliterated by the substitution of the thought impression representing the highest poise and equilibrium. Long is the struggle, fatiguing is the ideal. It is like the immense broad jump of Hanuman from the southern-most shore of India to the nearest end of Ceylon,—no halting places but one uninterrupted jump. No wonder therefore that the life of a Jnanayogi demands a combination of qualities that are to be very rarely met with in actual life.

It therefore goes without saying that the Jnanayogi ploughs a lonely furrow. He must not expect sympathy, encouragement, cheer and understanding from those amongst whom his life is cast. He must supply his own sympathy, he must provide his own cheer, because he is so high above the level of the world that the world hardly grasps his height. The poet Bhartrihari has beautifully described the impression of such a life on the unthinking mob: unable to understand his worth, the common populace ask one another 'Is he a chandala or a Brahmin, sudra or an ascetic, a philosopher or a mystic?' While the crowd, unable to comprehend his infinite greatness, talk these words with gaping mouths, the Jnani quietly walks

his way, neither flattered by the ignorant compliments nor angry with the unreasoning denunciation.

The path of Jnana is always the path of the minority. The majority has no attraction for a religion of incessant ratiocination and perpetual denial of sense impressions. The crowd wants a rough and ready religion which gives them hope and consolation, without putting any strain on their intellectual and other resources which generally are very slender. The crowd wants a religion of superstition, of blind faith, of compromise, of mental quiet, of self-complaisance. The path of Jnana is the very negation of all this. It has been aptly said that truth is a corrosive substance of infinite power and potency and since the very beginning of society has never confirmed people in their unthinking self-satisfaction. In the essence, it is the very nature and purpose of truth to create a spiritual unrest and the higher the level of a particular truth, the greater the unrest created by it. But the masses want a religion which *will not* storm-toss them. Truth has never paid any homage to society ; society has to pay its homage to Truth or die.

This in fact is the gist of Jnanayoga. Several questions which are generally discussed in Jnanayoga have no real bearing ; for instance the problem of marriage or Brahmacharya has no intrinsic connection with Jnanayoga. Whether a man should live in cave or in city is also a question besides the point. Similar is the case with the usual dialectics about action before knowledge and action after knowledge. Jnanayoga has nothing to do therewith. // What Jnanayoga aims at is to rise above the three qualities Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. As Shri Krishna says 'Oh Arjuna, be above the three qualities.' The chief function of Jnanayoga is to be superior to the pairs, to attain a condition of mind which receives with impartial unperturbation and unconcern the impact of the pairs, *i.e.* of opposites. 'Those whose mind can settle itself to *samya* have conquered rebirth while yet in this body. As *samya* is a characteristic of the Absolute (Brahma) they can fitly be said to live in the Brahman. //

There must have been hundreds of Jnanayogis in ancient India, persons, or rather supermen who had reached the peak of knowledge and had become knowledge personified. Of these the great Shri Shankaracharya may be said to be the most typical and representative of the race. Born several centuries after the science and art of Jnanayoga had been formulated with logical precision, argued out with dialectical skill and had stood the test and adaptation of time, he has been able to make so far the best, the profoundest and most complete exposition of the path of knowledge. A superman certainly he was; otherwise how could he finish all his education well before he had entered his teens, and had finished his scholarly commentaries ere yet he had emerged out of the teens? To him we owe the best exposition of the path of knowledge after it had developed from Upanishadic, post-Upanishadic, Buddhistic and post-Buddhistic periods. In his life he represented the very essence of Jnanayoga and his life of pure sublimity, of scholarly profundity, of ascetic simplicity was the fit and most appropriate setting for the missionary zeal, the fiery iconoclastic fervour, the marvellous organizing genius, the most subtle dialectical skill, all of which shed noble lustre on his supreme personality. If there were an ideal Jnani, one who seemed never to have even the faintest impression of the sense on the pure whiteness of his immaculate reason, it was he; and yet who worked more for the sake of happiness and elevation of mankind? It is centuries since the great genius of Shri Shankaracharya threw its searchlight on the path of knowledge and inevitably the path has become beset with all sorts of inconveniences. The time was now ripe for one to be born who would take up the work of Shri Shankaracharya at the point where he had left it and re-interpret and restate the message of Jnanayoga in the light of the tremendous developments in arts, sciences, philosophy, and all the departments of human life. How excellently the Swami has been able to do his work can be seen from the following extracts from his discourses on Jnanayoga.

The whole search for Jnana ends in the grand dis-

covery that Jnana is not far off but quite near, not there but here, not that but this. Says the Swami :—

“After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were working as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own self, the reality of your own life, body and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it; not to become pure, you are pure already. Nature is like that screen which is hiding reality beyond. Every good thought that you think or act upon, is simply tearing the veil, as it were, and the purity, the Infinity, the God behind manifests Itself more and more. Finer and finer becomes the veil, more and more of the light behind shines forth, for it is its nature to shine. It cannot be known, in vain we try to know it. Were it knowable it would not be what it is; for it is the eternal subject. Knowledge is a limitation. Knowledge is objectifying. He is the eternal subject of everything, the eternal witness in this universe, your own self. Knowledge is as it were a lower step, degeneration. We are the eternal subject already. How can we know it?” (Vol. II, pp. 81-2)

This then is the eternal theme,—the ‘Real Nature of Man’. But as the Swami points out, that real nature is hidden from us as it were. We are that but nature is like the screen that is hiding the reality beyond. This concealment of our real nature from us is Maya. The doctrine of Maya is India’s grandest contribution to the philosophy of the world. It explains as nothing else explains all the difficulties that face philosophy. Swamiji’s three London lectures on Maya afford most satisfying reading. In these three lectures he has sought to familiarize the westerners with the difficult concept of Maya. Says he :—

“The mind is limited. It cannot go beyond certain limits: beyond time, space and causation. As no man can jump out of his own self, so no man can go beyond

the limits that have been put upon him by the laws of time and space. Every attempt to solve the laws of causation, time and space, would be futile, because the very attempt would have to be made by taking for granted the existence of these three. The world has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to mind. The world has no unchangeable, immovable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence, seeing that it exists and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence.

“Our whole life is a mixture of this contradiction of existence and non-existence. There is this contradiction in knowledge. It seems that man can know everything, if he only wants to know; but before he has gone a few steps, he finds an adamant wall which he cannot pass. All his work is in a circle and he cannot go beyond that circle. The problems which are nearest and dearest to him, are impelling him on and calling, day and night, for a solution, but he cannot solve them, because he cannot go beyond his intellect.

“These tremendous contradictions in our intellect, in our knowledge, yea, in all the facts of our life face us on all sides. A reformer arises and wants to remedy the evils that are existing in a certain nation; and before they have been remedied, a thousand other evils arise in another place. The knowledge of happiness brings the knowledge of unhappiness.

“Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world. It is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil and wherever there is evil there is good, wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and every one who smiles will have to weep, and whoever weeps must smile also.” (Vol. II, pp. 91-7)

The question now arises: If this world is a Tantalus' hell, if everything in this world is rushing towards the goal of destruction, and that none can stem the tide, none can hold it back even for a minute, what hope is there for

man? What is his duty when matters stand thus? It is the duty of an intrepid and ratiocinating mind to face every question squarely and answer it the best way it can.

Swamiji says: "Two ways have been proposed. One method which every one knows, is very common and that is 'It may be very true but do not think of it. Make hay while the sun shines. It is all true, it is a fact. But do not mind it. Seize the few pleasures you can, do what little you can, do not look at the dark side of the picture but always towards the hopeful, the positive side.' This is what is called practical wisdom and never was it more prevalent in the world than in this nineteenth century, because never were harder blows hit than at the present time. It is put forward in the strongest way at the present time, but it fails as it always must fail. We cannot hide a carrion with roses. So with our lives. We may try to cover our old and festering sores with cloth of gold but there comes a day when the cloth of gold is removed and the sore in all its ugliness is revealed.

"Is there no hope then? That we are all miserable, that this world is really a prison, that even our so-called trailing beauty is but a prison-house and that even our intellects and minds are prison-houses have been known for ages upon ages. Is there no way out? We find that with all this, with this terrible fact before us, in the midst of sorrow and suffering, there is still a small voice that is ringing through all ages, through every country, in every heart. 'This is My Maya Divine, made up of qualities, and very difficult to cross. Yet those who come unto Me, cross the river of life.' 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' This is the voice that is leading us forward. Man has heard it. This voice comes to men when everything seems to be lost and hope has fled, when man's dependence on his own strength has been crushed down, and everything seems to melt away between his fingers and life is a hopeless ruin. Then he hears it.

"On the one side is the bold assertion that this is all nonsense, that this is Maya, but along with it, there is the most hopeful assertion that beyond Maya, there is a way



out. Religion begins with a tremendous dissatisfaction with the present state of things." ( Vol. II, pp. 121-3)

In other words, the doctrine of Maya is the foundation, so to speak, of spiritual life. It is a most puzzling doctrine to understand. It is the key to Advaita philosophy. Swamiji took the greatest care to explain all the implications of the Maya theory. The greater number of his hearers found it very difficult to keep pace with the growing subtlety of the argument. However to the more advanced part of his audience, those who had a certain advanced knowledge of philosophy and metaphysics, the lucidity of his explanations appealed most. In his lecture on the 'Absolute and the Manifestation' he has in scientific and philosophical phraseology explained the implications of the doctrine of Maya. The Swami showed how the Absolute appeared to have become manifest by the interaction of Maya, and that the very question 'How the Absolute became manifest' was absurd. Says he :—

"Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen and when it is seen on the lower side, It appears as the universe. Now we at once gather from this, that in the Absolute, there is neither time, nor space, nor causation. The idea of causation cannot be there, seeing that there is no mind, no thought. The idea of space cannot be there, seeing that there is no external change. What you call motion and causation cannot exist where there is only One. What we call causation begins after, if we may be permitted to say so, the degeneration of the Absolute into the phenomenal and not before, that our will, our desire and all these things always come after that.

"Whenever we ask why anything happens, we are taking for granted that everything that happens must have a 'why,' that is to say, it must have been preceded by something else which acted as the cause. This precedence and succession are what we call the law of causation. It means that everything in this universe is by turn a cause and an effect. In asking what caused the Absolute what an error we are making! To ask this question, we have to suppose that the Absolute also is bound by some-

thing and, in making this supposition, we drag the Absolute down to the level of the universe. For in the Absolute there is no time, space or causation: it is all One. That which exists by itself alone cannot have cause. That which is free cannot have any cause." (Vol. II, pp. 130-32)

People may ask 'What good are all these subtleties to us? Why should we confound our brains by tackling problems of the whys and the wherefores of this universe—problems which have bewildered the wits of even the greatest philosophers? Are these mere academic questions raised to exercise the talents and the dialectical skill of metaphysicians or have they any practical bearing on the life of a man? It may be said generally by way of reply to such intellectual cravers that the path of Jnana is not for such as them. The votaries of this path must stand limitless ratiocination, must cheerfully wade through all the intricacies of logic. They must neither be deterred by the intellectual subtleties of the argument nor by the startling originality of the conclusions. Those who are deficient in these qualities may seek salvation through other yogas. The Jnanayoga is not for such as these. However, we may directly answer their question by saying that the problems just tackled are the very necessity of a deeply religious mind and unless correct and satisfying solution is found out for them, there can be no soul's freedom and deliverance. Unless the Real Nature of man is understood, unless all the implications of Maya are properly grasped, unless the Absolute is studied in its relation to the manifestation, we have no means to find out the way out of this life. Therefore it was that the Swami gave such careful and such strenuous attention to them. The way to Freedom lies through the solution of these mystifying problems. Says he:—

"First we see then that the question 'What caused the Absolute' is a contradiction in terms and secondly we find that the idea of God in the Advaita is this Oneness, and therefore we cannot objectify Him, for we are always living and moving in Him whether we know it or not. Whatever we do is always through Him. Now the question is, what are time, space and causation? Therefore it seems

that here are two, the Absolute and the Maya (the sum-total of time, space and causation). It seems apparently very convincing that there are two. To this the Advaitist replies that it cannot be called two. To have two, we must have two absolute independent existences, which cannot be caused. In the first place time, space and causation cannot be said to be independent existences. Time is entirely a dependent existence. So also is the case with space, so with causation.

“The one peculiar attribute we find in time, space and causation is that they cannot exist separate from other things. Try to think of abstract space, you cannot. You have to think of it as space between two limits. It has to be connected with some object. So with time. You cannot have any idea of abstract time. Time depends on two events, just as space has to be related to outside objects. And the idea of causation is inseparable from time and space. There are shadows around everything which you cannot catch. They have no real existence. Yet they are not non-existent, seeing that through them all things are manifesting as this universe. Thus we see first that this combination of time, space and causation has neither existence nor non-existence. Secondly it sometimes vanishes. To give an illustration, there is a wave on the ocean, the wave is the same as the ocean and yet we know it is a wave and as such different from the ocean. What makes this difference? The name and form, *i. e.* the idea in the mind and form. Now can we think of a wave form as something separate from the ocean? Certainly not. It is always associated with the ocean idea. If the wave subsides, the form vanishes in a moment, and yet the form was not a delusion.

“The whole of this universe, therefore, is, as it were, a peculiar form; the Absolute is that ocean, while you and I, the sun and stars and everything else are various waves of that ocean. And what makes the waves different? Only the form and that form is time, space and causation all entirely dependent on the wave. As soon as the wave goes, they vanish. As soon as the individual gives up this Maya, it vanishes for him and he becomes free. The whole

struggle is to get rid of this clinging on to time, space and causation which are always obstacles in our way. This is therefore the process by which to achieve that conquest :— through the subjective, by perfecting the subjective. I make bold to say that the only religion which agrees with and even goes a little further than modern researches, both on physical and moral lines, is the Advaita and that is why it appeals to modern scientists so much.” (Vol: II, pp. 134-8)

The Advaita to the Swami is the grandest conception of the rationalistic man. On the one hand, it had to contend with the powerful battery of the Sankhya philosophy, on the other hand, rival Dualistic schools sought to usurp its throne. But in spite of all opposition, Advaita still stands, *par excellence*, the ideal of humanity, an ideal which, while it stands the full scrutiny of science and research, is neither dry nor mundane like science, but is a living truth at once cheering and uplifting. With reference to the Advaita system vis-a-vis the Sankhya philosophy, the Swami says :—

“The first point the Advaita contends with Kapila is his idea of God. Just as the series of modifications of Prakriti, beginning with the individual intellect and ending with the individual body require a Purusha behind as the ruler and governor, so in the cosmos, the universal intellect, the universal egoism must have a ruler and a governor. How will the cosmic series become complete without the universal Purusha behind them all as the ruler and the governor? If you deny a universal Purusha behind the cosmic series, we deny your Purusha behind the individual series. If it be true that behind the series of graded, evolved, individual manifestations, there stands one that is beyond them all, who is not, composed of matter, the Purusha, the very same logic will apply to the case of universal manifestations. This universal self which is beyond the universal modifications of Prakriti is what is called Ishwara, the Supreme Ruler, God.

“Now comes the more important point of difference. Can there be more than one Purusha? The Purusha, we have seen, is omnipresent and infinite. The omnipresent, the infinite cannot be two. If there are two infinities A and

B, the infinite A would limit the infinite B, because the infinite B is not the infinite A, and the infinite A is not the infinite B. Difference in identity means exclusion, and exclusion means limitation. Therefore A and B, limiting each other, cease to be infinities. Hence, there can be but one infinite, that is, one Purusha.

"Now, we will take up our 'x' and 'y' and show they are one. We have shown how what we call the external world is 'x'+mind, and the internal world 'y'+mind; 'x' and 'y' are both quantities unknown and unknowable. All difference is due to time, space and causation. These are the constituent elements of the mind. No mentality is possible without them. You can never think without time, you can never imagine without space and you can never have anything without causation. These are the forms of the mind. Take them away and the mind itself does not exist. All difference is therefore due to the mind. According to Vedanta, it is the mind, its forms, that have limited 'x' and 'y' apparently, and made them appear as external and internal worlds. But 'x' and 'y,' being both beyond the mind, are without difference and hence one. We cannot attribute any quality to them, because qualities are born of the mind. That which is qualityless must be one; 'x' is without qualities, it only takes qualities of the mind; so does 'y'. Therefore these 'x' and 'y' are one. The whole universe is one. There is only one self in the universe, only one existence; and that one existence, when it passes through the forms of time, space and causation, is called by different names, Buddhi, fine matter, gross matter, all mental and physical forms. Everything in the universe is that one, appearing in various forms. Take off the network and it is all one. Therefore in the Advaita philosophy, the whole universe is all one in the self which is called Brahman. That self when it appears behind the universe is called God. The same self when it appears behind this little universe, the body, is the soul. *This very soul therefore is the self in man.* There is only one Purusha, the Brahman of the Vedanta; God and man, analysed, are one in it. The universe is you yourself, the unbroken you; you are throughout the

universe. 'In all hands you work, through all mouths you eat, through all nostrils you breathe, through all minds you think.' This is the Advaita conclusion." (Vol. II, pp. 458-60)

Swamiji's bent of mind was no doubt towards Advaita, but this did not prevent him from appreciating the positions of the Dualists as well as the qualified Monists. Swamiji's preference for Advaita rested on two reasons. First, he did not regard Advaita as a *school*, a *system*, *one* out of *many* different branches of philosophy. Advaita he regarded as the consummation of all philosophy. Advaita was the Truth itself, other systems of philosophy were partial appreciations of Truth and, hence as the seeker after Truth, Swamiji preferred the Advaita as being unalloyed, unadulterated, unmitigated truth. It was Truth with a capital T. The Swami has beautifully illustrated his point thus:—

"You are a Dualist. Never mind, you have got to admit that by its very nature the soul is perfect; only by certain actions of the soul, has it become contracted. Indeed Ramanuja's theory of contraction and expansion is exactly what the modern evolutionists call Evolution and Atavism. The soul goes back, becomes contracted as it were, its powers become potential and by good deeds and good thoughts, it expands again and reveals its natural perfection. With the Advaitist the one difference is that he admits the evolution in nature and not in the soul. Suppose there is a screen, and there is a small hole in the screen. I am a man standing behind the screen and looking at this grand assembly. I can only see very few faces here. Suppose the hole increases; as it increases more and more all this assembly is revealed to me until the hole has become identified with the screen. There is nothing between you and me in this case; neither you changed nor I changed. All the change was in the screen. This is the Advaitist position with regard to Evolution—evolution of nature and manifestation of the Self within. Not that the Self can by any means be made to contract. It is unchangeable, the Infinite one. It was covered, as it were, with a veil, the veil of Maya, and as this Maya veil

became thinner and thinner, the inborn, natural glory of the soul comes out and becomes more manifest." (Vol. III, p. 239)

Swamiji's preference for the Advaita was also based on patriotic grounds. He saw that in the present needs of India Advaita and not Dvaita will save India. Dvaita he associated with softness, Advaita he associated with strength; and according to him, what the country wanted in these days was not softness but strength. Says he:—

"When I was in America, I heard once the complaint made, that I was preaching too much of Advaita and too little of Dualism. Aye, I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the dualistic love theories of worship and religion. I know it all. But this is not the time with us to weep even in joy; we have had weeping enough; no more is this the time with us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become like masses of cotton, and are dead. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. This is what we want and that can be only created, established and strengthened by understanding and realising the ideal of Advaita, the ideal of oneness of all." (Vol. III, p. 190)

"I understand the wonderful flow of love that comes from the idea of a Personal God. I thoroughly appreciate the power and potency of Bhakti on men to suit the different needs of times. What we now want in our country, however, is not so much of weeping, but a little strength. What mine of strength is in this Impersonal God, when all superstitions have been thrown overboard, and man stands on his feet with the knowledge—I am the Impersonal Being of the world! What can make me afraid? I care not even for nature's Laws! Death is a joke to me! Man stands on the glory of his own soul, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Deathless—that soul which no instruments can pierce, which no heat can dry, before

whose magnitude, the suns and moons and all their systems appear like drops in the ocean, before whose glory space melts away into nothingness and time vanishes into non-existence. This glorious soul we must believe in." (Vol. III, p. 130)

Having carefully considered all the implications of the three yogas, the Swami thus came to the final and matured conclusion :—

"Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, *i.e.* in the three stages of Vedanta philosophy, the *Dvaita*, the *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita* ; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in a man. Each one is necessary. This is the essence of religion. The Vedanta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, *i.e.* *Dvaita*, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity ; as applied to the semitic groups, Mahommedanism. The Advaita as applied in its yoga perception form is Buddhism etc. Now by religion is meant Vedanta ; the applications may vary according to the different needs, surroundings and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc. apply it each to their own special cult and forms." (Vol. V, p. 66)

This synthesis of *Dvaita*, *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita* may be anything but conventional, but it shows the master-mind of Swamiji at work in the preparation of a new philosophy which will embrace all the religions of the world alike and at the same time leave ample scope for local personalities, authorities, worship, ceremonials, rituals and even superstition. It is flashes of genius like these that for ever establish the claims of the Swami as one of the makers of the new philosophical era.

The theory of reincarnation forms a most important part of Vedanta, because while the higher doctrines of the soul and its qualities and liberation must engage the intellect only of the chosen few, this theory of reincarnation touches every individual and average life in a way which is at once intimate and subtle. Swamiji's presentation of this theory is very comprehensive and he has taken into



account all the latest thought and research thereupon. Says he :—

“So far as explaining the tendencies of the present life by past conscious efforts goes, the reincarnationists of India and the latest school of evolutionists are at one ; the only difference is that the Hindus, as spiritualists, explain it by the conscious efforts of individual souls and the materialistic school of evolutionists by an hereditary physical transmission. The schools which hold to the theory of creating out of nothing, are entirely out of court.

“The issue has to be fought out between the reincarnationists, who hold that all experiences are stored up as tendencies in the subject of those experiences, the individual soul, and are transmitted by reincarnation of that unbroken individuality, and the materialists who hold that the brain is the subject of all actions, and the theory of the transmission through cells.

“It is thus that the doctrine of reincarnation assumes an infinite importance to our mind, for the fight between reincarnation and mere cellular transmission, is in reality the fight between spiritualism and materialism. If cellular transmission is the all sufficient explanation, materialism is inevitable, and there is no necessity for the theory of the soul. If it is not a sufficient explanation, the theory of an individual soul bringing into this life the experiences of the past is as absolutely true. There is no escape from the alternative, reincarnation or materialism. Which shall we accept ?” ( Vol. IV, pp. 216-17 )

The Swami was a brave thinker and a braver preacher. To those who refused to believe in reincarnation of the soul because we had no memory of the past lives, he said :—

“Although we have seen that it is not necessary for the theory that there shall be memory of past lives, yet at the same time, we are in a position to assert that there are instances which show that this memory does come, and that each one of us will get back this memory in that life in which he will become free. Then alone you will find that this world is but a dream. Then alone you will realize

in the soul of your soul that you are but actors and the world is a stage; then alone will the idea of non-attachment come to you with the power of thunder; then all this thirst for enjoyment, this clinging on to life and this world, will vanish forever; then the mind will see clearly as daylight how many times all these existed for you, how many millions of times you had fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, relatives and friends, wealth and power. They came and went. How many times you were on the topmost crest of the wave, and how many times you were down at the bottom of despair! When memory will bring all these to you, then alone will you stand as a hero and smile when the world frowns upon you. Then alone will you stand up and say 'I care not for Thee even, O Death! What terrors hast Thou for me?' This will come to all." (Vol. II, p. 219)

It will thus be seen that the theory of reincarnation depends upon not ratiocination merely, but actual proof, actual realization. In fact Vedanta, Jnanayoga and all depends in its last analysis upon actual realization of the truth that is propagated. Jnanayoga especially is the yoga of realization. It prides itself upon thought, no doubt, but after a certain stage, even thought is left behind and nothing remains but realization; and the value of thought is only in its relation to realization; nothing more and surely nothing less.

With the gradual realization of these truths, with the gradual perception of the physical and moral harmony and unity of the world, the Jnanayogi attains peaks of wisdom and spiritual experience that are denied to ordinary mortals. He looks at the whole world and also at himself from such a lofty, ethereal, noble view-point, that all element of littleness, weakness, sin, vanish and he is as it were one with the Everlasting and the Universal. Says the Swami:—

"He alone lives, whose life is in the whole universe and the more we concentrate our lives on limited things, the faster we go to death. Those moments alone we live when our lives are in the universe, in others; and living, this little life is death, simply death and that is why the

fear of death comes. The fear of death can only be conquered when man realises that so long as there is one life in this universe, he is living. When he can say 'I am in everyt hing, in everybody, I am in all lives, I am the universe' then alone comes the state of fearlessness. It is only the spirit that is the individual because it is infinite. The apparent man is merely a struggle to express, to manifest this individuality." (Vol. II, pp. 80-1)

This then is the essence of Jnanayoga, the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of thought. There is a tendency in this busy, hurrying and slipshod age to discourage thought for the sake of action. But thought can, and should, never be replaced by action. Action is, within its limits, all right but it can never be a substitute for thought. Says the Swami :—

"There is a great tendency in modern times to talk too much of work and decry thought. Doing is very good but that comes from thinking. Little manifestations of energy through the muscles are called work. But where there is no thought, there will be no work. Fill the brain therefore with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work. Talk not about impurity, but say that we are pure. We have hypnotised ourselves into this thought. Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thought enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourself open to these thoughts. Say to your own minds 'I am He, I am He'. Let it ring day and night into your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare 'I am He'. That is the truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours. Know the truth and practise the truth. The goal may be distant, but awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached." (Vol. II, pp. 85 & 87).

## CHAPTER V

### KARMAYOGA

Swamiji's eight lectures on Karmayoga give the first systematic treatment to the modern reader of the Gospel of Action. Since very ancient times in India, leaders of Vedantic, religious and philosophical thought have been divided between the demands for action and the lure of thought pure and simple. Is a life of unmixed thought higher, better, more conducive to spiritual growth, is it more perfect than the life of action, pure, exalted and dynamic action? That has been the problem that is facing Indian Humanity for ages together. Several of the Upanishads, like the Ishavasya Upanishad, belong to the school of action as representing the highest in human aspiration. कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि 'In action alone,' they declare, lies the salvation of mankind. Thought is great, they freely admit. But what good is thought unless it be supported and supplemented by action? On the other hand, there are Upanishads and spiritual prophets who consider thought, pure thought, as the essence of life and immortality. Action, they contend, is gross, physical, material. Thought is refined, ethereal and spiritual. Thought, they argue, is the goal of action. Our daily, yearly actions give us thought; they fructify in thought. Hence thought is hundred times greater than action. Action to them is the seed, and thought the fruit; action is the means, thought is the end; action is the method and effort, thought is the goal and consummation of life.

Between arguments so vigorously advanced and so persistently defended and argued out, it seems almost hopeless to pronounce the judgment. And yet the modern student of philosophy and practical religion is in this respect at a greater advantage than the ancient one. The implications of the gospel of action have at no time been clearer to the human mind than they are at present. And hence it is that the nineteenth century and twentieth century human mind is the most fitted to pronounce a ripe judgment between these two contending parties. No judge can hope to fully satisfy both the plaintiff and the

defendant; nor is he called upon to do this impossible feat. But the judge must and can at least place the pros and cons of the case in a form which will be most acceptable to both of them and, if he does so, neither of the two quarrelling parties will have any inclination to impeach his impartiality.

To a judicious mind the essence of the quarrel seems to be the result of a wrongly put syllogism. Truth is not one-sided; it has many aspects and directions and whichever aspect is emphasized is likely to create an impression in a slovenly and impatient mind that that aspect is the whole and unmitigated truth. Take, for instance, the oft-repeated dictum of the Gita: "But out of the two, Karmayoga is preferable to Karma-Sanyasa." Now, this is a statement which at once gladdens the hearts of the protagonists of action because they find therein the most unambiguous statement of their theory. But the champion of Karma-Sanyasa feels no uneasiness at this statement. With the greatest non-chalance he accepts it *in his own way*. He contends that the words 'is preferable' विशिष्यते mean 'is easier'. His point is that though the Gita declares that Karmayoga is *easier* than Karma-Sanyasa, still the Gita nowhere considers it as more *exalted* than the gospel of thought. So then this statement, to the Karma-yogi so unambiguous, does not disturb the equanimity of the protagonist of thought. We have given a very simple illustration. There are others which are equally characteristic though not equally simple. And so the long and short of the controversy is that neither party is satisfied.

Here in our humble opinion the fault is with the attitude of the contending parties themselves; and such faults are likely to persist so long as people are given to slur over real points and think confusedly. They forget that a thing which will command approval from one standpoint will not necessarily do the same from the other. To judge of the rival claims of action and thought we must go deeper and carefully analyze all the implications of our different view-points. Moreover, we must consider things psychologically, historically, socially and from other view-points.

To take a familiar illustration : Silk coat is not always preferable to a woollen coat, nor a woollen coat to a silk one. The silk coat is most suitable for summer, the woollen coat, most suitable for winter ; the preference which we give to them depends upon the use which we can make out of them. To say that intrinsically either of them is better than the other is nonsense. Similarly, considered from the sociological and national view-points, sometimes the gospel of thought may be *more useful* to society and sometimes the gospel of action may be *more needed*. And when this is so, many careless speakers or writers say that one or the other is *better* while what they should really have said is that one or the other is *more useful* or *needed*. Confusion of thought is very often the result of confusion of language.

Again, is it wise that either thought or action should be considered better and the other should be condemned or disapproved ? How is the man to select a life of thought, if his physical constitution urges him to a life of action ; or how can a man of peace and retirement find solace in the troubles of everyday life ? Why should he prefer them if his physical organism or mental constitution is unsuited to it ? It is all very well for one author of the Upanishad to glorify thought and for another to glorify action : But if I am not fit for action, why should I not prefer thought ; or if I am skilled in action, why should I not neglect thought, supposing I can have only one out of the two ? Personal capacity and adaptability goes before everything else, and no man should be saddled with duties and responsibilities which he abhors and asked to shrink from and avoid those which are equally lofty and which he is attracted towards. Even supposing that a doctor is a better man than an engineer, there is no reason why I should not go in for engineering if I have no aptitude for the medical science.

If these factors are taken into consideration, much of the heat in the controversy will disappear and the contending parties will argue their case with coolness and equanimity. Then there is the third factor to be taken into consideration.' Supposing the life of action as a

spiritual aid is enjoined, how far does the social environment favourably react to such a life? If a man chooses action and then finds the social surroundings discouraging to a life of action combined with morality, surely he has made a bad choice. There may be times when social depravity might have gone so low as to discourage a life given to exalted action. It is all very well to say that we must rise over our surroundings or that we must choose a life of activity precisely because the social life is become more and more corrupt; but these are prescriptions for heroes. The average man and woman will not be happy in such an environment. They would prefer the quiet of a secluded life with no possibilities of dangerous moral reactions to the uncertainties and risks of a life of action accompanied by unsuitable social atmosphere. That is why a sage in the Mahabharat says: 'Why cover our feet with mire and then wash them? Is it not far better to avoid approaching the mire itself?' This view-point deserves some consideration at the hands of those who want to consider the claims of a life of action and compare them with the claims of a life of thought.

There is yet another point which we must mention before we analyse the discourses of the Swami on Karma-yoga. That point is this. A life of action is an expensive life. It is not a mere forest life. A city life of mere thought, as divorced from action as understood in these days is just possible. A householder's forest life was, as we know, possible even in ancient times. Leaving aside for a time the question of celibacy *vs.* married life, it is possible to lead in city life a life of inaction; and it is just possible for a protagonist of Karma-Sanyasa to lead, while yet wearing the yellow robes, the life of incessant action. A Herbert Spencer living in London the cloistered life of a student was, we say, a man of thought and not a man of action. On the contrary, one is free to say that the great Shankaracharya himself, than whom no more powerful advocate of Karma-Sanyasa could be imagined, was in essence a man of action; otherwise how could he overpower Buddhism with his wonderful intellectual weapons of offence and defence?

Swamiji's discourses on Karmayoga provide very refreshing reading, because he has not taken any sides on the question. Instead, he has explained in simple and yet charming language the essence of the gospel of Action; and this he has done without confining himself to any particular book. The Gita is considered to be the most reputed text on this subject. But the presentation of the theme by the Swami is far wider than the presentation in the Gita itself and harmonizes exceedingly well with the mental outlook of a seeker for truth in the twentieth century.

In the first chapter Swamiji deals with Karma in its effect on character. The goal of every yoga is perfection and illumination through certain selected means, and the goal of Karmayoga is moral perfection through a life of ceaseless action. To the Karmayogi, action is the very essence of life. He does not shun action; he does not shrink from it; he does not go through it as something unclean and yet necessary. If he does all this he is not a man of action. Unless he has the ecstasy for action, he is not a man of Karmayoga. Karmayoga is not for cravens, shirkers, cowards, and hesitating men. It is for the man of iron will, clean hands and pure motives. It is for one who will dare in the cause of truth. 'The world is for the brave.' The gospel of action is essentially a gospel for brave and aggressive people.

The prospect of any coming action must send a thrill through your body. It must send a glow to your face. You must not Hamlet-like confront it: 'The time is out of joint! Oh! cursed plight, that I should be put to set it right.' Napoleon used to rub his hands with glee at the near approach of a military action. The real Karmayogi must be a man of this type. He must regard life as his battle-field and have trained himself for the deeds of valour he is going to perform. No sacrifice must be too great for him to win laurels on this battle-ground. With calm assurance, unresting, unhasting he must march on and on till the goal is reached. If a man has put his life on a storm basis, what storms can frighten him out of his wits? If a man is well prepared for and well skilled



in the battle of life, how can he be sent back from the battle-field, covered with shame and ignominy?

This then is the attitude of the Karmayogi on life. To him life is a battle-field. He has come to that battle-field well armed from head to foot. There are no chinks in his moral armour. He is not only physically prepared but is so mentally also. Defeat has no terrors for him. What he is afraid of and what he takes most care of is any possible loss in moral integrity. If that integrity is gone, he is gone for ever. To him life is a gold coin of which the obverse is action and the reverse is character. You cannot separate the one from the other. Action to him is synonymous with character. Action to him means so much opportunity for self-expression. How can a man who regards action as an opportunity for self-expression shun and avoid it? Then he will avoid so much expression of his inner moral self. The moral well-being of life being the goal and action being the means thereto, the Karmayogi sits busy at his shop of life, getting moral commission from every occurrence in which he takes part.

One action may be trivial, the other important; one may be safe, the other hazardous; one may be private and the other public: to every action he has one inquiry 'How much moral commission?' He squeezes every action dry of the moral uplift it contains. Such a man will naturally make his activities ever expansive, because the more extended the field of action, the greater will be his moral commission. It will thus be seen that mental outlook of a Karmayogi on life and action is essentially and radically different from the outlook of a Jnanayogi who delights more in thought than in action and is in fact impatient of action which he considers to be an impediment to the free influx of thought.

The Swami truly says that "Karma in its effect on character is the most tremendous power that man has to deal with. Man is, as it were, a centre and is attracting all the powers of the universe towards himself and in this centre is fusing them all and again sending them off in a big current. All the actions that we see in the world, all the works that we have around us, are simply the

display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man. Machines or instruments, cities, ships, or men-of-war, all these are simply the manifestation of the will of man; and this will is caused by character and character is moulded by Karma. As is Karma, so is the manifestation of the will. The men of mighty will the world has produced have all been tremendous workers, gigantic souls, with wills powerful enough to overturn worlds, wills they got by persistent work. Our Karma determines what we deserve and what we can assimilate. We are responsible for what we are; and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future, can be produced by our present actions, so we have to know how to act." (Vol. I, pp. 27-8)

It will thus be seen that Karmayoga is the science of 'knowing how' to act. As a great philosopher said, 'knowing how' is winning half the battle. The difference between a successful man and an unsuccessful man lies only in this; the former 'knew how,' the latter did not; and Karmayoga is the science and art to teach us how to act, how to live, how to extract the maximum moral advantage out of our every-day humdrum life. Karma-yoga thus exalts our actions and throws over them the radiated heat and light of moral fervour.

We from our childhood try to learn so many sciences and arts. But this science of sciences and this art of all arts, namely how to live, we lie in blissful ignorance of, with the result that we lead inefficient lives and, instead of getting the success we thought we deserved and hoped to obtain, our life becomes a mass of ruins.

The secret of efficient work and action lay, according to the Swami, in the grand idea of work for work's sake. Says he :—

"Work for work's sake. There are some who are really the salt of the earth in every country and who work for work's sake, who do not care for name or fame or even to go to heaven. They work just because good will come out of it. If a man works without any selfish motive in

view, does he not gain anything? Yes, he gains the highest. Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practise it. Love, truth and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power. All the outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away; it will not cause power to come to you, but if restrained it will result in development of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which will make a Christ or Buddha." (Vol. I, pp. 30-1)

So then the essence of Karmayoga is work without motive, work with detachment! Work, work and work! Work more and work again! That is the gospel. Timid and idle men shrink from this, to them, terrific gospel of work. They say 'When will it stop? When shall I get rest? When shall I reach my heaven?' The Swami says:—

"There arises a difficult question in this ideal of work. Intense activity is necessary; we must always work. We cannot live a moment without work. What then becomes of rest? Here is one side of the life-struggle,—work in which we are whirled rapidly round. And here is the other, that of calm, retiring renunciation; everything is peaceful around, there is very little of noise and show. Neither of them is a perfect picture. The ideal man is he who, in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activities and in the midst of the intensest activities finds the silence and solitude of the desert. He has learnt the secret of restraint. He has controlled himself. He goes through the streets of a big city with all its traffic, and his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave, where not a sound could reach him; and he is intensely working all the time. That is the ideal of Karma-yoga, and if you have attained it, you have really learnt the secret of work." (Vol. I, p. 32)

The average man leads a discontented and disconsolate life, because he thinks God has dealt very unkindly with him. Had he been a Napoleon or a Shivaji or a Shankaracharya, how would he have spent his time, how great would he have shown himself to be, what things

noble and magnanimous would he not have worked. But because God Almighty put him on an humble station, all the difficulties of his position have cropped up. He cannot show himself to be heroic because there are no heroic moments sent to him. He cannot reveal the inner fire of heroism burning in his heart because the days and nights that have been allotted to him are so prosaic and dry ! Would to God that some heroic moment, one, only one at least would be spared for and sent to him !

That is the heart's desire of every ordinary person who considers himself to be ambitious and capable of greatness. What a delusion ! As if great men had calendared days, hours and moments to demonstrate the greatness latent in them ! As if any tenders are offered or given for heroic deeds to be wrought by the heroic soul ! Well, may be there is no such thing ! Every day, every hour, every moment can be *made* heroic, if only the heroic soul exists. The heroic soul looks with a heroic gaze on the drabbest things before him and *makes* them heroic. Heroism, greatness, grandeur are not external qualities, but are, so to speak, the mind-projections of a heroic, great or grand person !

If we clearly keep this truth at the back of our mind, instead of lamenting dearth of heroic opportunities, we shall set ourselves to utilize every moment for work and profit. This is exactly the ideal of a Karmayogi. The Karmayogi knows that the shortest cut to greatness and heroism is the utilization of the present moment and the hearty performance of our nearest duty ; and the proper performance of our nearest duty depends upon the proper understanding of our own ideal. Says the Swami :—

“ Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it ; that is a surer way of progress than taking up other men's ideals which he can never hope to accomplish. All the men and women, in any society, are not of the same mind, capacity or of the same power to do things ; they must have different ideals and we have no right to sneer at any ideals. Let every one do the best he can for realizing his own ideal. The

apple tree should not be judged by the standard of the oak nor the oak by that of the apple." (Vol. I, p. 39)

It is here that many people err. They think that because they like or favour a particular ideal, that ideal should be foisted upon others, while the economy of the world demands the juxtaposition of different sets of ideals. Various problems will face the Karmayogi in his onward march towards truth and higher moral life. Is resistance good or non-resistance preferable? Does the life of a householder afford greater opportunities for self-exaltation or the life of a monk? The Swami says:—

"Unity in variety is the plan of creation. However men and women may vary individually, there is unity in the background. In the Hindu system of morality, we find that this fact has been recognized from very ancient times; and in their scriptures and books on ethics, different rules are laid down for different classes of people, the householder and the monk, and the householder is the basis, the prop of the whole society; he is the principal earner. The householder is the centre of life and society. It is a worship for him to acquire and spend wealth nobly. If you want to be a householder, hold your life a sacrifice for the welfare of others; and if you choose the life of renunciation, do not even look at beauty, money and power. Each is great in his own place but the duty of the one is not the duty of the other." (Vol. I, pp. 39-40)

We have seen that ideals may vary, but the spirit of work, service and disinterestedness must abide. Service in its broadest sense embraces all the different aspects of life; the higher the service you render, the higher is your worth in the spiritual scales. Again and again does the Swami revert to the eternal truth of character being the sum-total of all the *Samskaras* of a particular person. Change the *samskaras* by changing the good or bad impressions and the character of that person is changed. If it requires one million evil thoughts to make a bad man, the way to goodness lies through the replacement of those one million bad thoughts by one million good thoughts. Character is thus fluid. The noblest character is always in danger of being smirched, the worst offender may look up

to improvement and moral resurrection. The doctrine of Karmayoga is the doctrine of optimism. Work, work well and you are uplifted. Says the Swami :—

“What I am just at this moment is the effect of the sum-total of all the impressions of my past life. This is what is meant by character. Each man's character is determined by the sum-total of these impressions. If good impressions prevail, the character becomes good ; if bad, it becomes bad. If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions ; and they will influence his thoughts and work without his being conscious of the fact. In fact these bad impressions are always working and their resultant must be evil ; and that man will be a bad man ; he cannot help it. When a man has done so much good work and thought so many good thoughts then there is an irresistible tendency in him to do good, in spite of himself and even if he wishes to do evil, his mind as the sum-total of his tendencies will not allow him to do so ; the tendencies will turn him back ; he is completely under the influence of the good tendencies.

“As the tortoise tucks its feet and head inside the shell and you may kill it and break it in pieces, and yet it will not come out, even so the character of the man whose control over his motives and organs is unchangeably established. He controls his own inner forces, and nothing can draw them out against his will. By this continuous reflex of good thoughts, good impressions moving over the surface of the mind, the tendency for doing good becomes strong and as a result we feel able to control the *Indriyas*.” (Vol. I, pp. 52-3)

Having thus explained the necessity of replacing evil impressions by good impressions, the Swami proceeds to explain that for the purposes of the highest condition of spiritual liberation, one must be above bondage of evil as well as of good. How to attain that kind of mental equilibrium which will rise superior to good as well as to evil is the problem before the aspirant for spiritual welfare and beatitude. The Swami says :—

"A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. There is a thorn in my finger, and I use another to take the first out and when I have taken it out, I throw both of them aside; so the bad tendencies are to be counteracted by the good ones, until all that is evil almost disappears or is subdued and held in control in a corner of the mind; but after that, the good tendencies have also to be conquered. Thus the 'attached' becomes the 'unattached'." (Vol. I, p. 53)

How to do this is the problem before the Karmayogi. His goal is permanent non-attachment. As a half-way house to that goal he accepts attachment to good. But this is strictly speaking a temporary measure. And when a good measure of success is attained therein one can proceed to the highest goal.

But whether we accept a half-way house or not, we must never lose sight of the fact that we must be unattached. Says the Swami:—

"Therefore be unattached. Let things work, let brain centres work; work incessantly, but let not a ripple conquer the mind. Work as if you were a stranger in this land, a sojourner. Remember that the whole nature is for the soul, not the soul for nature. The very reason for nature's existence is for the education of the soul. It is there because the soul must have knowledge and through knowledge free itself. Instead we are thinking that the soul is for nature and that the spirit is for the flesh.

"The whole gist of the teaching is that we should work like a *master* and not as a *slave*. Work incessantly, but do not do slave's work. Work through freedom! Work through love! Selfish work is slave's work. Each act of love brings happiness. Real existence, real knowledge, and real love are eternally connected with one another. With real love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss." (Vol. I, pp. 54-5)

Thus our goal of life is unattachment and we have to undergo the strict discipline required to pass through this finely poised doctrine of non-attachment. It is a life's work so to speak. We shall have to spend years and years before we shall be able to understand the real essence of

non-attachment. But what if the whole life is required to be spent or be laid down for the sake of some grand ideal?

The Swami says: "There are two things which guide the conduct of men: might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably the exercise of selfishness. All men and women try to make the most of whatever power or advantage they have got. Mercy is heaven itself. To be good we have all to be merciful. Even justice and right should stand on mercy. All thought of obtaining return for the work we do hinders our spiritual progress, nay in the end it brings misery. There is another way in which this idea of mercy and selfless charity can be put into practice; that is, by looking upon work as 'worship' in case we believe in a Personal God. Here we give all the fruits of our work unto the Lord; and worshipping Him thus, we have no right to expect anything from mankind for the work we do. The Lord Himself works incessantly and is ever without attachment. Just as water cannot wet the lotus-leaf, so work cannot bind the unselfish man by giving rise to attachment to results. The selfless and unattached man may live in the very heart of a crowded and sinful city; he will not be touched by sin." (Vol. I, pp. 57-8)

We thus come to the secret of work; working without motive, without attachment, working in the light of service and worship. If we can work thus, work, instead of becoming a burden, a trouble, a source of worry, will become a perpetual fountain of bliss and joy. Mankind is groaning under the weight of self-created misery. We do not know how to work and, owing to our ignorance of the art of work, we get miserable and then of this self-manufactured misery, we imagine God to be the author. If we really cherish our own happiness, we shall learn the secret of the art of work and mould our lives accordingly.

Once we accept the implications of the gospel of action, once we regard ourselves not as the slaves but as the masters of work, it is clear that all ideas of certain kinds of works as being binding upon us will have to go overboard. There is no such thing as a duty imposed upon us by some exalted or extraneous authority. What



we regard duty is something very useful to us in the lower stages of our mental development, is something very proper to the social sense which inheres in every man, is no doubt something which is not to be lightly dismissed or neglected,—all the same it is something whose existence in terms of higher ethics the Karmayogi refuses to admit. Once admit the binding compulsion of duty and where remains your boasted non-attachment and ambition of rising superior to the dual forces of good and evil ?

The Swami says: "It is necessary in the study of Karmayoga to know what duty is. The ordinary idea of duty everywhere is that every good man follows the dictates of his conscience. But what is it that makes an act a duty ? To give an objective idea of duty is entirely impossible. From the subjective standpoint we may see that certain acts have a tendency to exalt and ennoble us while certain other acts have a tendency to degrade and brutalise us. Later on, we find that even this idea of duty undergoes change, and that the greatest work is done only when there is no selfish motive to prompt it. Yet it is work through the sense of duty that leads us to work without any idea of duty. When work will become worship, nay, something higher, then will work be done for its own sake." (Vol. I, pp. 63-4)

How to proceed along the difficult path ? How to rise superior to duties ? How to attain a moral position which will be ten times more exalted than the binding, though in a way helpful, idea of duty ? The answer to this question is that to rise above duty we must begin by doing duties nearest and next to us. The secret of all successful work, of all non-attached work is to make the ends and the means the same. When we are doing any work, let us not think of anything beyond. Let us do it as worship, as the highest worship and let us devote our whole life to it for the time being.

Says the Swami "It is the worker who is attached to results that grumbles about the nature of duty that has fallen to his lot. To the unattached worker all duties are equally good and form efficient instruments with which selfishness and sensuality may be killed and the freedom

of the soul secured. We are all apt to think too highly of ourselves. Our duties are determined by our deserts to a much larger extent than we are willing to grant. To the grumbler, all duties are distasteful. Nothing will ever satisfy him, and his whole life is doomed to prove a failure. Let us work on, doing as we go whatever happens to be our duty and being ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel. Then surely we shall see the Light." (Vol. I, p. 68)

This problem of non-attachment can be approached from several different view-points. We have just seen how, in the higher ethics, the conception of duty has to be thrown overboard. We are generally attached to our work because we are attached to the conception of duty. If the conception of duty to which we are attached goes away, naturally will disappear the attachment to work. The same view can be established by analysing the motives which prompt us to do good or to do our duty or to launch ourselves in action. What generally is our guiding motive? We set ourselves to work because we want to uplift the world. We assume the role of the world's patrons. We take upon ourselves the task of uplifting the world and to this task we *attach* ourselves. That is how this attachment comes to us. In a sense it would be far better if we do not offer our philanthropy to the world as thereby we shall escape so much attachment which is sure to be born in our mind. Now the question arises how we can do this contemplated good without becoming attached to it. It is of course easy to say that it is far better not to do good and be unattached than to do good and be attached. The question is whether there is not any middle and acceptable course and this question can be satisfactorily solved if our attitude towards the good things we set about to do is changed. Instead of becoming patrons, let us be the servants of the world. Instead of imagining that we are the helpers of the world, let us believe that we more help ourselves than the world. Then our attachment is likely to vanish.

Says the Swami: "Our duty to others means helping others; doing good to the world. Why should we do good

to the world? Apparently to help the world but really to help ourselves. We should always try to help the world, that should be the highest motive in us; but if we consider well, we find that the world does not require our help at all. This world was not made that you or I should come and help it. We cannot deny that there is much misery in it; to go out and help others is therefore the best thing we can do, although, in the long run, we shall find that helping others is only helping ourselves. As a boy I had some white mice. They were kept in a little box which had little wheels made for them, and when the mice tried to cross the wheels, the wheels turned and turned and the mice never got anywhere. So it is with the world and our helping it. The only help is that we get moral exercise. This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. Life is good or evil according to the state of mind in which we look at it; it is neither by itself. Yet we must do good. The desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say 'Here my poor man' but be grateful that the poor man is there so that by making a gift to him, you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world and thus become pure and perfect." (Vol. I, pp. 73-4)

This statement implies that at bottom it is impossible for the world to become better or worse as a whole. Well has the world been compared to a dog's curly tail. People have been trying for ages to make it straight but they have failed. Our fresh efforts are not likely to succeed more when Buddhas, Christs, Krishnas, Vyasas and others have failed. But this need not make us despondent. This need not make us give up what we have undertaken to do. It is true that the world is not going finally and radically to improve. But if my efforts to set it right result at least in setting me right, why not make the efforts? People believe in fanaticism as a great incentive to work. But evils follow fanaticism. So it is

far better to know the intrinsic worth of things even if such a knowledge reduces our ardour than to be working under false enthusiasm and mistaken outlook.

To express our idea in a still different and yet original manner: How can non-attachment be paraphrased? What are the conditions essential for a man to demonstrate non-attachment in his conduct? What are the concomitant qualities of non-attachment? Swamiji regards self-abnegation as the invariably concomitant quality of non-attachment.

Says he: "This Nivritti is the fundamental basis of all morality and all religion, and the very perfection of it is entire self-abnegation, readiness to sacrifice mind and body and everything for another being. When a man has reached that state he has attained to the perfection of Karmayoga. This is the highest result of good works. Although a man has not studied a single system of philosophy, although he does not believe in any God and never has believed, although he has not prayed even once in this life, if the simple power of good actions has brought him to that state where he is ready to give up his life and all else for others, he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through his knowledge; and so you may find that the philosopher, the worker and the devotee all meet at one point, that point being self-abnegation. Howevermuch their systems of philosophy and religions may differ, all mankind stand in reverence and awe before the man who is ready to sacrifice himself for others. Here it is not at all any question of creed or doctrine,—even men who are very much opposed to all religious ideas when they see one of these acts of complete self-sacrifice feel that they must revere it. Have you not seen even a most bigoted Christian when he reads Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia' stand in reverence of Buddha, who preached no God, preached nothing but self-sacrifice? The only thing is that the bigot does not know that his own end and aim in life is exactly the same as that of those from whom he differs. The worshipper, by keeping constantly before him the idea of God and a surrounding of

good comes to the same point at last and says 'Thy will be done' and keeps nothing to himself. This is self-abnegation. The philosopher with his knowledge sees that the seeming self is a delusion and easily gives it up; it is self-abnegation. So Karma, Bhakti and Jnana all meet here." (Vol. I, pp. 84-5)

The necessity for non-attachment is brought home to us in another way also. In this world, we cannot do the least good without at the same time doing some evil howsoever infinitesimal. Now the question arises, how to escape from the effect of this evil Karma, unwillingly or unknowingly done. We cannot pick out only the good and leave aside the evil. What we must do is either to accept both or to renounce both. The latter course has been accepted by the leading philosophers of our religion. Says the Swami:—

"Any action that you do for yourself will bring its effect to bear on you. If it is a good action, you will have to take the good effect, and if bad, you will have to take the bad effect. But any action that is not done for your own sake, whatever it be, will have no effect upon you. Therefore the Karmayogi says: 'Do not give up the world. Live in the world. Imbibe its influences as much as you can; but if it be for your own enjoyment's sake,—work not at all. Enjoyment should not be the goal. First kill yourself and then take the whole world as yourself.'

"To work therefore, you have first to give up the idea of attachment. Secondly do not mix in the fray, hold yourself as a witness and go on working. The greatest weakness often insinuates itself as the greatest good and strength. It is a weakness to think that any one is dependent on me and that I can do good to another. This belief is the mother of all our attachment and through this attachment comes all our pain. You may have wives and husbands, regiments of servants and kingdoms to govern; if only you act on the principle that the world is not for you and does not invariably need you, they can do you no harm." (Vol. I, pp. 86-7)

There have been various Karmayogis in India. Of these four deserve special mention. First comes Lord

Krishna, the central Deity in the Gita and the Mahabharat. The Gospel of Karmayoga was forgotten for ages together. Lord Krishna came and preached it to Arjuna. He removed all his doubts and put him on the road of valiant but non-attached action. Then there was Lord Buddha. Swami Vivekananda pays the following tribute to him :

“ Buddha is the one man who ever carried this teaching of Karmayoga to perfection. All prophets of the world except Buddha had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be divided into two sets, one set holding that they are the incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are mere messengers from God ; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who said : ‘ I do not care to know your various theories about God. Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is. ’ He was in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives ; and what man worked more than he ? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character, such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal Karmayogi, acting entirely without motive and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man ever born, beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and soul that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has ever been manifested.” (Vol. I, p. 115)

Then there was King Janaka whose honoured name as a supreme Karmayogi finds mention even in the Gita. The *alias* of Janaka was Videhi, meaning ‘ one who had got above body consciousness ’. To the pleasure-giving touch of a woman he was as indifferent as to the burning flames of fire. The former gave him no pleasure, the latter

gave him no pain. He was the ideal householder, the ideal king. He put himself in the centre of the social machine and worked incessantly and yet without attachment.

Last but not least is the sage Shuka more known as a great Bhakta than as a great Karmayogi. He was the son of Vyasa and the father, who was a great sage and a friend of King Janaka, after having properly educated him sent him up to King Janaka. King Janaka used various devices to test the equanimity of Shuka and one such test was fully satisfied by the illustrious boy-sage. Not only had he himself lost the body consciousness but it is stated that his presence stirred no sex modesty in the minds of young women. This is the highest triumph of spiritual equanimity. So long as India honours and worships the memory of these four great Karmayogis, India has no reason to lose hope of any kind and in any respect.

"If we are genuine Karmayogis and wish to train ourselves to the attainment of the highest state, wherever we may begin we are sure to end in perfect self-abnegation; and as soon as this seeming self has gone, the whole world, which at first appears to us to be filled with evil will appear to be heaven itself and full of blessedness. Its very atmosphere will be blessed.

"First it is feeling, then it becomes willing and out of that willing comes the tremendous force for work that will go through every vein and nerve and muscle until the whole mass of your body is changed into an instrument of the unselfish yoga of work and the desired goal of perfect self-abnegation and utter unselfishness is duly attained." (Vol. I, pp. 90-1)

This in essence is the gist of Karmayoga. Karma-yoga is essentially twentieth century religion. Men are nowadays too very busy to think, too very sophisticated to love, too very incompetent to be able to practise the psychic gymnastics of Rajayoga. But they understand action. The urge and appeal of action goes straight to their heart. They believe in action and are capable enough to perform action.

More: they need action and nowhere more so than in India where, wherever you turn your gaze, the need of

work, work and evermore work manifests itself. That is why in India the Gita has been interpreted by the ablest minds as the philosophy of action. Whether it is Tilak or Gandhi or Arabindo Ghose or Annie Besant—all agree in holding that in the Gita the philosophy of action is preached by Lord Krishna. Swami Vivekananda was of the same opinion. He too held that the Gita preached the philosophy of action.

Karmayoga then is the religion of the age. Its practice is simple. There are no technicalities, no ceremonials, no subtle disquisitions. The man in the street can very easily understand the philosophy of action.

Karmayoga asks us to be good and do good ; to love our neighbours as we love ourselves ; to sacrifice ourselves for the cause of others ; to work incessantly, but without attachment ; to labour but not to claim the fruits of labour.

Some say, Where is the philosophy to back up your Karmayoga ? Well ; Karmayoga, while it is supported by the highest Vedantic philosophy, can well be interpreted in terms of the labourer's language. It is the first great attempt to separate ethics from metaphysics. While it is an exalted religion, it can have its appeal to matter-of-fact-mind humdrum workers. Other paths Godward are difficult, some like Rajayoga even dangerous to the uninitiated. But the greatest recommendation of Karmayoga is that it is simple even to the most ignorant and, even when slightly and perfunctorily practised, saves a man from disaster.

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥



## CHAPTER VI

### RAJAYOGA

Swamiji's lectures and discourses on Rajayoga attracted very wide attention both in America and England and opened to the thinking minds of those countries, quite a new line of thought and investigation. Even before Swamiji had gone to U. S. America, a kind of interest was evinced in several psychic practices, genuine and otherwise, which several persons, who professed to have been in touch with supersensuous realities, advertised for the benefit of mankind. The special appeal of these practices to youth, beauty, health or longevity or some such equally attractive object brought a kind of notoriety to them and it was not exactly known whether persons whose objects intimately touched the needs and desires and longings of millions of people were charlatans deserving condemnation and exposure or were pioneer saviours of humanity whose methods may be wrong or unsuccessful but about whose honesty of purpose, there could be no doubt or difference of opinion. Hypnotists, faith-healers and all sorts of divine magicians had, before the Swami went to U. S. America, honeycombed the American society and taken up a very large share of the attention of the people and had in a perverted and haphazard way familiarized the people of the great American continent with the central theme of Rajayoga and thus shown to them that there are immense powers latent in every man and woman, powers which under proper guidance and effort can be aroused to the eternal benefit of the human race.

It is true that before the advent of the Swami, the importance of these powers was brought home to the minds of the average people by an appeal to some immediate advantage which was more material than spiritual. All the same, that appeal failed not to create an interest in the minds of the people. Swamiji, however, at the very outset of his discourses pointed out to the fact that his aim in expounding the secrets of Rajayoga was not the restoration or development of youth, health, beauty

and longevity but spiritual freedom, which is or ought to be the goal of every right thinking man and woman.

While the European and American mind approaches the study of Rajayoga with certain immediate, definite and material objective, the Indian mind entertains no such lower objective. It approaches the science of Rajayoga with a certain awe and trepidation as well befits the approach of some poor man to the throne of an Emperor. But it is this awe and mysterious veneration which exactly forbids the average man from pursuing his inquiries after the first flush of curiosity is over.

Even in the Gita, we notice how Arjuna talks about Rajayoga which in those days was called Abhyasayoga. It was with something akin to terror that he listened to Lord Krishna's description of the yogi's higher flights of concentration and asked how it was possible for the average man to keep his mind perpetually on this high plane. He also asked what would be the fate of a man who had a fair start in this yoga but who, owing to the inherent dangers of the path, failed to reach the highest and was deflected from his course by unforeseen circumstances. Shri Krishna gave the right and proper answer. But though it satisfied Arjuna for the time being and satisfies all who read it, it has failed to make the path of Rajayoga anything like popular and has failed to attract the average man.

'Mind studying the mind' may well be described to be the theme of Rajayoga. The average man's mental tendencies go out. The Rajayogi's one ambition is to draw them in. The average man sees things that are outside, the Rajayogi is introspective. The average man's output of brain power is limited. The yogi's brain power is almost limitless. The average man's mind is torn with all sorts of conflicting passions and desires; the Rajayogi's mind is like the steady flame of an oil lamp protected from wind. So there can be no meeting ground between these two and that is why the average mind takes not easily to the practice of Rajayoga, which indeed is the Prince of all yogas.

The aim of Rajayoga is to attain spiritual concentration through the control of the mind. Sri Arabindo Ghose has said: 'Brahmacharya and *sattvik* development created the brain of India. It was perfected by yoga.' The ancient history of India proves beyond all shadow of doubt the phenomenal progress our forefathers had made in all the walks of life. In science, in art, in philosophy, in metaphysics, in music, in painting, in medicine, in astronomy, the Indian mind, which of course then meant the Hindu mind, had made wonderful progress. European research scholars of to-day observe with something like awe and respect the tremendous work already done by Hindu thinkers in all these and other walks of life; and they pay unstinted homage not only to the weariless and incessant activity of the mind but also of the superior brain-power which must have directed those activities. That the discoveries made in India more than two or three thousand years ago are standing the test and scrutiny of modern science and are in certain cases even anticipating the discoveries which western savants equipped with modern instruments of invention are making, go conclusively to prove that the brain which made those discoveries must have been of the most superior quality. And no wonder. Those brains which even transcended the limits of matter and the senses could well penetrate the mysteries of the world. If India of to-day has to gain back her pristine glory, she must exert herself to reacquire that power of brain which gave her in ancient days the intellectual supremacy of the world.

The idea of the superconscious state, the supersensuous state of mind, is the Hindus' grandest contribution to the culture and civilization of the world. The conscious and the subconscious states are all that is known to the western mind which had studied the activities of the mind on the conscious plane only. Hindu psychic philosophers say that so long as man is standing merely on the rational or conscious plane, he cannot attain the highest. Our senses lead us not very far. Our intellect of which we are justly proud, will lead us a little still further but there it will stop. We shall not

have the Everest of our life by merely pursuing the path of ratiocination. But it is exactly beyond this impenetrable mass of matter that exists all that humanity holds dear. Unless and until that is realised, there is no hope for man, there is no peace for him. That and nothing else, he has set his heart on.

We talk of God, of religion, of a higher ethical life. But what is the basis of all this talk? Why should we be good and do good to the world? Why should we be religious? Why should we kneel before or worship God? Can reason answer these questions? Can reason prove the existence of God? No! For there are as many reasons to believe that there is no God as there are to believe that there is God! Who is going to adjudicate this matter then? And what are we going to do until it is adjudicated? If reason cannot answer these questions, much less can instinct, which is only inverted reason, give a satisfactory reply to them. All ideas about utilitarianism and other 'isms' fail to satisfy us. It is impossible to grope in eternal darkness in this way.

The Rajayogi holds that there is latent in the heart of every person a power to rise beyond, to transcend the limits of matter, on occasions to come face to face, as it were, with the Eternal Reality, to be identified as it were with that Reality and then after a time again to descend down to body consciousness. This power of exalting oneself to superconsciousness and to supersensuousness exists in every man, and real Religion begins with the awakening of this power. Then alone religion begins to exist for a man. Then alone the word 'God' has some meaning, some reality. And it is not only possible for a man to attain this stage but it is the duty of every man and woman to so train himself or herself that this mysterious power will be aroused to his or her everlasting benefit.

The science of Rajayoga aims to rouse this power within man. The chief means is concentration or in other words perfect concentration of the mind. Compare your mind to a lake where the stillness of the water is disturbed by stones continuously being thrown in it. Every minute numbers of stones are being thrown at the lake causing

wave after wave to arise and causing the mud at the bottom to spring up and make the crystal-clear water appear turbid. We cannot see our face in the lake on account of the innumerable waves rising in it, on account of the mud at the bottom spreading all over. We must stop throwing stones at the water. We must allow the turbidity of the water to give place to limpidity. We must so behave as to control the agitation of the water and our object is to still the disturbance.

In like manner, we must take care of everything that tends to disturb the mind and create waves of anger, of lust, of anxiety, of grief, of bodily pain thereupon. If money is the disturbing cause, why not renounce it altogether and lead the life of a pauper? If the gust of passion creates eddies and whirlpools on the still stream of your mind, why not go to the root of the question and avoid the company of a woman? If grief unsettles your mental equilibrium, why not lead the life of a forest anchorite where not a sigh will be heard or created? If bodily pain arising from disease prevents you in your efforts to concentrate your mind, why not so regulate your food, sleep, habits, etc., that the coming of disease would be rendered impossible? Why not take each and every step that will prevent mental disturbance and ensure mental quiet? Why not, abjuring the life of tradition and humdrum usage, make a bold departure and create environments for ourselves where humanly speaking, mental peace would be ensured? Why not try all this?

To this certain people reply that this is the path of cowardice. What is the bravery in running away from circumstances, environments, that tend to throw our mental equanimity off the balance? What the bravery in flying from temptations and thus proving the inherent weakness of our mind? Glory consists in resisting temptations when they come. Glory lies in triumphing over the causes that disturb the harmony of our thoughts, the causes which destroy our mental repose.

There is a certain plausibility around this argument used with such telling effect. But it is not very difficult to expose the utter sophistry of the whole thing. What the

yogi seeks is not a brave path, is not a path which is purposely, intentionally rendered difficult but a sure path. Those whose minds are already so attuned to internal harmony or those who with slight effort can make them so attuned may not take the path which is considered to be the very antithesis of bravery. But those who think more of the certainty of the result than of the bravery of a particular path should, the Rajayogi says, follow the path sketched out.

But whichever the path chosen, one thing is certain. About that there is no doubt. The Rajayogi must practise absolute Brahmacharya. A thoroughly continent life alone is productive of that refined energy that is so abundantly required for the continued absorption in superconscious thought. Superconscious thought and the approaches to that thought through Dhyana and Dharana consume all that energy that is normally expressed in sexual thought and life and hence unless and until it is preserved from the normal use and stored and conserved for the higher spiritual use, samadhi is an impossibility. Hence the need in a yogi of absolute continence, of absolute control of thought, word and deed. The power of continence brings forth that supreme nervous strength which is required to bear the shocks of action and reaction, concentration and relaxation, meditation and repose.

Side by side with these practices in strict Brahmacharya, the Rajayogi must release the immense power for good which is latent or patent, manifest or secret in him, power the underlying qualities of which bear the generic name of sattvik qualities. The element of sattva is one which takes us Godward more and more, and the more this element of sattva is in a man the more godly and spiritual he is and becomes. The Gita says that sattva makes for light while rajas tends to action. It is the spiritual Light of Brahman that the Rajayogi wants and that light can be had only through the switch of sattva. Switch on sattva and the light of spirit, luminous and serene, will shine; but switch it off and tamas, dark and sinful, will prevail and lead you to destruction, moral and physical. The shortest cut to concentration, to that mental peace

which is indispensably required for concentration, is the immense unloosening of the pure and effulgent spiritual energy in us that is known as sattva guna. That is why Sri Arambindo regards sattvic development as being a predominantly contributory cause to the perfection of the brain of ancient India.

Hard, severe, lonely is the life of the Rajayogi. Practically he recognizes no relaxations, no lighter moods. He pines not for repose, for the absorption of his mind in easy and petty matters. His goal is noble, his method is pure, his God is all-powerful. With resolute and quick steps, with a determined and unfaltering heart, he marches along the self-chosen path—the straight and narrow path—turning neither to the right nor to the left, allowing his mind no distraction, no recreation, not hasting, not resting. Such is the Rajayogi. He is the greatest spiritualist, the sturdiest, the most rational, the most self-reliant. Like the Bhakta, he knows no god who is the figment of his own imagination. He does not care to draw, like the Karmayogi, moral commission on all sorts of petty or big acts; nor like the Jnanayogi, he allows his mind to be filled with tall talks of Maya and Brahma. He is incomparably greater than all these, because he is the most logical, most thorough-going, the most self-reliant, the most enterprising! He is the salt of this earth.

It is a peculiar characteristic of the ancient Indian mind that it refused to be content with the study of the external phenomena in nature. The ancient Greek mind studied outside nature and developed all arts, sciences and learning connected with external nature; but the ancient Indian mind, while it made an equally or perhaps more comprehensive study of the external nature, did not neglect the more important internal nature of man. The idea of the thoroughness of our internal nature sprang after outside nature was duly attended to and it was asked 'What is that by studying which we can know everything?' Study of internal nature of man is the only answer to this question.

In modern Europe too, the same phenomenon may be noticed; since the eighteenth century, we find that

Europe had very seriously started the study of external nature and all kinds of sciences—inductive and deductive—as well as arts began to flourish. The application of the discoveries of modern physical sciences to the growing needs of man so absorbed the genius and attention of Europe that it hardly found time to study the internal nature. The application of the discoveries of modern physical sciences to the question of the growth of military, commercial, industrial and social power also was responsible for the tremendous preoccupation of its mind and utter neglect of the study of internal man. But the science of our internal nature is a very grand, very vast and very noble theme. It is grander than the science of studying the external nature and this science of our internal nature, this science of the powers of our mind is veritably a most wonderful science, a science that deserves the careful study of all thoughtful persons. The Swami thought that—

“At a certain period of Indian history this one subject of man and his mind absorbed all their interest. And it was so enticing because it seemed the easiest way to achieve their ends. Now the Indian mind became so thoroughly persuaded that the mind could do anything and everything according to law that its powers became the great object of study. Charms, magic and other powers were nothing extraordinary but a regularly taught science. Such a conviction came upon the race that physical sciences nearly died out.” (Vol. II, p. 20)

Such was the immense hold this science of Rajayoga had once got upon the Indian mind. No wonder, therefore, that it reached a grandeur of development, unknown to any other science and attracted the finest and the noblest intellects of the land. Even after centuries of military domination, internal wars and unrests, the science has so much to teach to the world as, the Swami thought, would surprise the greater thinker. The Swami confessed that he knew very little of this science, and what little he knew, he knew after years and years of training. Says he:—

“I know very little of this science, but the little that I gained, I worked for thirty years of my life and for six years I have been telling the people what little I know. It



took me thirty years to learn it; thirty years of hard struggle. Sometimes I worked at it twenty hours during the twentyfour. Sometimes I slept only one hour in the night. Sometimes I worked whole nights. Sometimes I lived in places where there was hardly a sound, hardly a breath. Sometimes I had to live in caves. Think of that. And yet I know little or nothing. I have barely touched the hem of the garment of this science. But I can understand that it is true and vast and wonderful." (Vol. I, p. 22)

The claims of this science have been challenged by western scientists and psychologists with a vehemence and superficiality that does little credit to their thirst for knowledge and impartiality of outlook. Nobody says that the truth of this science should be accepted without any scrutiny. All that we want is that a patient investigation should be allowed. If the scientific mind is as prone to unbelief as the unscientific mind is to belief, then we shall have to say that even the scientific mind has its own superstition. We expect this at least from the scientific mind that it will readily lend its ear neither to belief nor to unbelief. Says the Swami:—

"Since the dawn of history, various extraordinary phenomena have been recorded as happening amongst human beings. Witnesses are not wanting in modern times to attest to the fact of such events, even in societies living under the full blaze of modern science. The vast mass of such evidence is unreliable, as coming from ignorant, superstitious or fraudulent persons. In many cases, the so-called miracles are imitations. But what do they imitate? It is not the sign of a candid and scientific mind to throw overboard anything without proper investigation. Surface scientists unable to explain the various extraordinary mental phenomena strive to ignore their very existence. They are, therefore, more culpable than those who think that their prayers are answered by a being or beings above the clouds or than those who believe that their petitions will make such beings change the course of the universe. The latter have the excuse of ignorance, or at least of a defective system of education which has taught

them dependence upon such beings, a dependence which has become part of their degenerate nature. The former have no such excuse." (Vol. I, p. 121)

Such scientists, or surface scientists as Swamiji would call them, would consult their own reputation by opening the gates of their mind for a critical study of Rajayoga. Rajayoga is not a science created by charlatans. It is the product of mighty intellects whose visions soared above to the plane of the superconscious, whose patience and industry carried out the subtlest researches into the domain of psychic phenomena and whose claim to have succeeded in their research is open to any scrutiny. Says the Swami :—

"For thousands of years, such phenomena have been studied, investigated, and generalised; the whole ground of the religious faculties of man has been analysed, and the practical result is the science of Rajayoga. Rajayoga does not, after the unpardonable manner of some modern scientists, deny the existence of facts which are difficult to explain; on the other hand, it gently, yet in no uncertain terms, tells the superstitious that miracles and answers to prayers and powers of faith, though true as facts, are not rendered comprehensible through the superstitious explanation of attributing them to the agency of a being or beings above the clouds. It declared that each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. It teaches that desires and wants are in man, that the power of supply is also in man; and that wherever and whenever a desire, a want, a prayer has been fulfilled, it was out of this infinite magazine that the supply came, and not from any supernatural being. The idea of supernatural beings may rouse to a certain extent the power of action in man but it also brings spiritual decay. It brings dependence. It brings fear. It brings superstition. It degenerates into a horrible belief in the natural weakness of man. There is no supernatural, says the yogi, but there are in nature gross manifestations and subtle manifestations. The subtle are the causes, the gross are the effects. The gross can be easily perceived by the senses; not so the subtle. The practice

of Rajayoga will lead to the acquisition of the more subtle perceptions." ( Vol. I, pp. 121-22 )

Such was the intrepid way in which the Swami made claim for the science of Rajayoga. He knew that once it appealed to the western scientific spirit, then its progress was assured; but so long as the scientists looked askance and revealed prejudice, hostility and worse, there was no hope for Truth to be revealed. Therefore he appealed to their best elements. He wanted them to give it a chance and investigate it as they would investigate astronomy, chemistry and the like. He wanted no favour but opportunity to demonstrate the truth of Rajayoga. Said he :—

"The science of Rajayoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching the Truth. In the first place, every science must have its own method of investigation. I could preach to you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practised the method. These are the truths of sages who had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than what the senses can bring us and they invite verification. They ask us to take up the method and practise honestly and then, if we do not find this higher truth, we shall have the right to say that there is no truth in the claim; but before we have done that, we are not rational in denying the truth of their assertions. So we must work faithfully, using prescribed methods and light will come.

"Thus we see that in the study of this Rajayoga, no faith or belief is necessary. Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself. That is what it teaches us. Truth requires no prop to make it stand. There is no mystery in what I teach. It is wrong to blindly believe. You must exercise your own reason and judgment. You must practise and see whether these things happen or not. Just as you would take up any other science, exactly in the same manner, you should take up this science for study. There is neither mystery nor danger in it. So far as it is true, it ought to be preached in the public streets in broad day-

light. Any attempt to mystify these things is productive of great danger." (Vol. I, pp. 131-34)

This was but fair offer, and must have impressed the thoughtful classes in America and England. Swamiji declared the goal of Rajayoga in language which the westerners would easily understand. Says he :—

"According to the Rajayogi, the external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the effect. So the external world is the effect, the internal the cause. In the same way, external forces are simply the grosser parts, of which the internal forces are the finer. The man who has discovered and learned how to manipulate the internal forces will get the whole of nature under his control. The yogi proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature. He wants to arrive at the point where what we call nature's laws will have no influence over him, where he will be able to get beyond them all. He will be the master of the whole of nature, internal and external. The progress and civilization of the whole human race simply mean controlling this nature. Different races take to different ways of controlling nature. Some say that by controlling internal nature we control everything; others that by controlling external nature we control everything. Carried to the extreme both are right, because in nature there is no such division as internal or external. The externalists and the internalists are destined to meet at the same point, when both reach the extreme of their knowledge. Just as a physicist, when he pushes his knowledge to its limits, finds it melting away into metaphysics, so a metaphysician will find that what he calls mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, the reality being one." (Vol. I, pp. 132-33)

The Swami was of firm opinion that success, even partial success, in Rajayoga was possible only to such men as gave heart and soul to the study. There is the danger of our curiosity, which is the greatest gift God has given to man, being prostituted for lower purposes of idle amusement instead of being, as it really should be, resolutely applied to the incessant pursuit of knowledge. There are men and

women in all societies who have a craze for novelty and who take up each and every new thing that comes in their way and, having toyed with it for some time, give it up in their pursuit of something anew. Such persons are not real seekers of knowledge. Such men can never get the Light of knowledge. It is not in such way that the great masters of the world discovered, met face to face, Truth. It is not this half-hearted pursuit of knowledge that can lead to Illumination. Says the Swami:—

“Be like the pearl oyster. There is a pretty Indian fable to the effect that if it rains when the star Swati is in the ascendant, and a drop of rain falls into the oyster, that drop becomes a pearl. The oysters know this; so they come to the surface when that star shines, and wait to catch the precious raindrop. When a drop falls into them, quickly the oysters close their shells and dive down to the bottom of the sea, there to patiently develop that drop into a pearl. We should be like that. First hear, then understand, and then leaving all distractions shut our minds to outside influences and devote ourselves to developing the truth within us. There is the danger of frittering away our energies by taking up an idea only for its novelty and then giving it up for one that is newer. Take up one thing, do it, see the end of that thing and before you have seen the end do not give it up. He who can become mad with an idea, he alone will see light. Those that only take a nibble here and a nibble there will never attain anything. They may titillate their nerves for a moment but there it will end. Those who want really to be yogis must give up once for all this nibbling at things. It is of no use to simply take a course of lessons. To those who are full of *tamas*, whose minds never get fixed on any idea, who crave for something to amuse them, religion and philosophy are simply entertainments. They are the unpersevering. To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. ‘I will drink the ocean’ says the persevering Soul; ‘at my will mountains will crumble down.’ Have that sort of energy; that sort of will; practise hard and you will reach the goal.” (Vol. I, pp. 177-78)

If a man works with such a resolute heart, says the Swami, in six months he will be a yogi. Knowledge yields its secrets to perseverance, devotion and concentration. Raja-yoga in fact is the science of, the yoga of, concentration. The method of concentration is, of course, useful in each and every science; but here in Rajayoga its importance is unique. In other sciences we have to concentrate upon external objects but here in Rajayoga we have to concentrate upon concentration itself. Our mind has, as it were, to study our mind. The goal of the science of Rajayoga is concentration and the means are of course concentration. So this double concentration is the secret of the science of Rajayoga. Says the Swami:—

“There is only one method by which to attain this knowledge that which is called concentration. The chemist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus, and throws them upon the materials he is gathering, analysing and so finds out their secrets. The astronomer concentrates all the energies of his mind and projects them through his telescope upon the skies; and the stars, the sun, the moon, give their secrets to him. The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. That is the secret.

“It is easy to concentrate the mind on external things. The mind naturally goes outwards. But not so in the case of religion, psychology, metaphysics where the subject and the object are one. The object is internal, the mind itself is the object, and it is necessary to study the mind itself, mind studying mind. The power of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its innermost secrets. Thus will we come to the basis of belief, the real genuine religion.” (Vol. I, pp. 130-31)

The Rajayogi holds that the 'five feet and more of bone and flesh' which God has given him is the temple of unlimited power. Every man or woman is the repository of the same power which moves oceans, solar systems, the universe. At one end there may be the sun, a living fount of light and at the other end there may be an ant, but behind them both is the same universal power that has manufactured them. Through ignorance and want of faith we hold ourselves limited while we all belong to the unlimited and unlimitable. Why should we beg for a few rupees when the whole stock of gold and silver stored in the Imperial Bank of India belongs to us? Why should we move about with shrinking footsteps and downcast gaze when we are entitled to squarely face the universe? Why should the emperor slave in his own palace? There is but one answer. We have lost living faith in our real nature. How to revive this forgotten faith is the problem before the yogi. Says the Swami:—

"In an ocean there are huge waves like mountains, then smaller waves, and still smaller, down to little bubbles, but back of all these is the infinite ocean. The bubble is connected with the infinite ocean at one end and the huge wave at the other. So one may be a gigantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is connected with that infinite ocean of energy which is the commonest birthright of every animal that exists. Wherever there is life, the storehouse of infinite energy is behind it. Starting as some fungus, some very minute, microscopic bubble, and all the time drawing from that infinite storehouse of energy a form is changed slowly and steadily until in course of time it becomes a plant, then an animal, then man, then God. This is attained through millions of aeons, but what is time? An increase of speed, an increase of struggle, is able to bridge the gulf of time. That which naturally takes a long time to accomplish can be shortened by the intensity of the action, says the yogi. A man may go on slowly drawing in this energy from the infinite mass that exists in the universe, and perhaps he will require a hundred thousand years to become a *Deva* and then perhaps five hundred thousand years to become still higher

and perhaps five millions of years to become perfect. Given rapid growth, the time will be lessened. Why is it not possible with sufficient effort to reach this very perfection, in six months or six years? There is no limit. Reason shows that. All beings will at last attain to that goal, we know. But who cares to wait all these aeons? Why not reach it immediately, in this body even?

"The ideal of the yogi, the whole science of yoga is directed to the end of teaching men how by intensifying the power of assimilation to shorten the time for reaching perfection, instead of slowly advancing from point to point and waiting until the whole human race has become perfect. This is what is meant by concentration, intensifying the power of assimilation, thus shortening the time. Raja-yoga is the science which teaches us how to gain the power of concentration." (Vol. I, pp. 156-57)

This immense life-giving knowledge-awakening divine-making power is in every man and is coiled up in the mysterious Kundalini and it is the object and purpose of the Rajayogi to awaken this power. The moment the Kundalini is awakened and begins to flow up through the hollow canal called *sushumna*, the yogi begins to see wonderful visions and when it at long last reaches the brain, the yogi attains final illumination. He becomes perfect. It is the ambition of every yogi to awaken this power, Kundalini, and his spiritual greatness is dependent upon and can be measured by the awakened *Kundalini*.

How to arouse this Kundalini? Again the answer is concentration. By concentration, by devotion, by Brahmacharya, by the performance of sattvik deeds, by Manayama can the great and unique Kundalini be aroused. All the great prophets of the world had this Kundalini awakened in some slight degree and that is why they could speak words of noble wisdom. Says the Swami:—

"When all the motions of the body have become perfectly rhythmical, the body has as it were, become a gigantic battery of will. This tremendous will is exactly what the yogi wants. This is, therefore, the physiological explanation of the breathing exercise. It tends to bring a rhythmic action in the body, and helps us through the



respiratory centre, to control the other centres. The aim of *pranayama* here is to rouse the coiled-up power in the *Muladhara*, called the *Kundalini*.

“Now the centre where all these residual sensations are as it were stored up, is called *Muladhara*, the root receptacle, and the coiled up energy of action is *Kundalini*, the ‘coiled-up’. Now if this coiled-up energy be roused and made active and then consciously made to travel up the *sushumna* canal, as it acts upon centre after centre, a tremendous reaction will set in. When a minute portion of energy travels along a nerve fibre and causes reaction from centres, the perception is either dream or imagination. But when by the power of long internal meditation, the vast mass of energy stored up travels along the *sushumna*, and strikes the centres, the reaction is tremendous, immensely superior to the reaction of dream or imagination, immensely more intense than the reaction of sense perception. It is superconscious perception. And when it reaches the metropolis of all sensations, the brain, the whole brain as it were reacts and the result is the full blaze of illumination, the perception of the Self. As this *Kundalini* force travels from centre to centre, layer after layer of the mind as it were opens up and this universe is perceived by the yogi in its fine or casual form. Then alone the causes of the universe, both as sensation and reaction, are known as they are, and hence comes all knowledge.

“Thus the rousing up of the *Kundalini* is the one and the only way to attaining Divine wisdom. The rousing may come in various ways—through love for god, through the mercy of perfected sages, or through power of the analytical will of the philosopher. Wherever there was any manifestation of what is ordinarily called supernatural power or wisdom, there a little current of the *Kundalini* must have found its way into the *sushumna*. Only in the vast majority of such cases, people have ignorantly stumbled upon some practice which set free a minute portion of the coiled up *Kundalini*. All worship consciously or unconsciously leads to this end.” (Vol. I, pp. 164-65)

So then the awakening of the Kundalini and the conversion of the vital energy into *ojas* is the end and aim of the yogi's life. The storing up of *ojas* for purposes of *dhyana*, *dharana* and *samadhi* is the prime object of the yogi. The spiritual and in a way even the temporal greatness of a man depends from the yogic point of view on the *ojas* that has been stored in his brain. If the person has stored a fairly large quantity of *ojas*, then he is sure to radiate life and power. But if, on the contrary, that life and power is not radiated in and through him, then of course, the yogi is entitled to presume that the person has not a sufficient power of *ojas* in him. The Swami pays very great importance to this point. Says he:—

“All energy has to be taken from its seat in the *mula-dhara* and brought to the *sahasrara*. The yogis claim that, of all the energies that are in the human body, the highest is what they call the *ojas*. Now this *ojas* is stored up in the brain, and the more *ojas* is in a man's head, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong. One man may speak beautiful language and beautiful thoughts, but they do not impress people. Another man speaks neither beautiful language nor beautiful thoughts, yet his words charm. Every movement of his is powerful. This is the power of *ojas*.

“Now in every man there is more or less of this *ojas* stored up. All the forces that are working in the body in their highest become *ojas*. You remember that it is only a question of transformation. The same force which is working outside as electricity or magnetism, will become changed into inner force; the same forces that are working as muscular energy will be changed into *ojas*. The yogis say that that part of human energy which is expressed as sex energy in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into *ojas* and as the *muladhara* guides these, the yogi pays particular attention to that centre. He tries to take up all this sexual energy and convert it into *ojas*. It is only the chaste man or woman who can make the *ojas* rise and store it in the brain.” (Vol. I, pp. 169-70)

It will now be clear why so much insistence is laid on perfect Brahmacharya in the practice of Rajayoga. Without a perfectly chaste body and mind, the conversion of the sexual energy into *ojas* is impossible and without the full amount of *ojas* in a man's brain, it would go very hard with him, if he were to practise yogic concentration. Brahmacharya, therefore, goes to the root of the problem. But mere Brahmacharya, while it gives the man the strength and virility to practise, would not teach him how to practise concentration. For that purpose, we must go to the main theme *Pranayama*, the control of *Prana*. The rousing of the mysterious power of Kundalini depends entirely or at least principally on Pranayama. But *Pranayama*, control of *Prana* does not merely mean rhythmical breathing or even different breathing exercises. *Prana* is the elemental power that rules the world through body, space and creation and a control of *prana* means an adjustment of the elemental power in an individual in such a way that it would be in harmony with the world at large. The Swami's exposition of this theme proves his supreme mastery over this subject. Says he:—

“The gigantic will-powers of the world, the world movers can bring their Prana into a high state of vibration and it is so great and powerful that it catches others in a moment and thousands are drawn towards them and half the world thinks as they do. Great prophets of the world had the most wonderful control of the *Prana* which gave them tremendous will-power. They had brought their Prana to the highest state of motion and this is what gave them power to sway the world. All manifestations of power arise from this control.

“It is the *Prana* that is manifesting as motion. It is the *Prana* that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the *Prana* that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of *Prana*. The sum-total of all forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state, is called Prana. The knowledge and control of this Prana is really what is meant by *Pranayama*.

“This opens to us the door to almost unlimited power. Suppose, for instance, a man understood the Prana perfectly and could control it, what power on earth would not be his? He would be able to move the suns and stars out of their places to control everything in the universe, from the atoms to the biggest suns, because he would control the *Prana*. This is the end and aim of Pranayama. When the yogi becomes perfect, there will be nothing in nature not under his control. All the forces of nature will obey him as slaves.” (Vol. I, pp. 147-48)

Here the Swami thought it fit to utter a word of caution to his western readers and hearers. Hypnotism, faith healing, Christian science and like other things were in his days engaging the attention of western thinkers and scientists. The Swami had no quarrel with them and wished them all success so long as they remained doing good without the aid of weakening of other means. But as an advocate of Rajayoga the Swami felt himself bound to examine their methods in the light of the Rajayogic theory and practice and the conclusion to which the Swami arrived was that while these people to be sure did some good to the people they weakened their minds which was a definite harm which they did to them. Swamiji's criticism on their general defect was mild but pointed. Says he:—

“What would be the result of controlling the mind? It then would not join itself to the centres of perception and naturally feeling and willing would be under control. You see in modern times, the faith healers teach people to deny misery and pain and evil. Where they succeed in making a person throw off suffering by denying it they really use a part of *Pratyahara* as they make the mind of the person strong enough to ignore the senses. The hypnotists in a similar way by their suggestion, excite in the patient a sort of morbid *pratyahara* for the time being. The so-called hypnotic suggestion can act only on a weak mind. And until the operator by means of fixed gaze or otherwise has succeeded in putting the mind of the subject in a sort of passive, morbid condition, his suggestions never work. •

"Now the control of the centres which is established in a hypnotic patient or the patient of faith healing, by the operator, for a time, is reprehensible because it leads to ultimate ruin. It is not really controlling the brain centres by the power of one's own will but is as it were stunning the patient's mind for a time by sudden blows which another's will delivers to it. It is not checking by means of reins and muscular force the mad career of a fiery team but rather by asking another to deliver heavy blows on the heads of the horses, to stun them for a time into gentleness.

"Every attempt at control which is not voluntary, not with the controller's own mind, is not only disastrous but it defeats the end. The goal of each soul is freedom, mastery. Instead of leading towards that every will current from another, in whatever form it comes, only rivets one link more to the already existing heavy chain of bondage of past thoughts, past superstitions. Beware therefore how you allow yourselves to be acted upon by others.

"Therefore use your own minds, control body and mind yourselves, remember that until you are a diseased man, no extraneous will can work upon you. Avoid every one, however great and good he may be, who asks you to blindly believe." (Vol. I, pp. 172-73)

The Swami was a hater of blind faith and superstition of any kind and whatever tended to weaken the mind naturally aroused his strongest opposition. A weak-minded man, he used to say, could never attain *samadhi*. If *samadhi* was the goal of Rajayoga, if the various physiological and psychological practices of the Rajayogi were to have the culminating experience and illumination of *samadhi*, how was it possible for the weak-minded to attain this be-all and end-all of all his ambitions? The Swami always stood for strength and never countenanced weakness of any kind. His description of the various preparatory stages leading to *samadhi* are characterised by clear thinking and lucid treatment. And as regards *samadhi*, he has tried to make the conception as easy as he could to the western mind. Says he:—

"We have, then, two planes in which the human mind works. First is the conscious plane, in which all work is always accompanied with the feeling of egoism. Next comes the unconscious plane where all work is unaccompanied by the feeling of egoism. That part of mind-work which is unaccompanied with the feeling of egoism is unconscious work and that part which is accompanied with the feeling of egoism is conscious work. But it does not end here. There is a still higher plane on which the mind can work. It can go beyond consciousness. When the mind can go beyond the line of self-consciousness it is called Samadhi or superconsciousness. How, for instance, do we know that a man in Samadhi has not gone below consciousness instead of going higher? In both cases, the works are unaccompanied with egoism. The answer is: By the effects, by the results of the work, we know that which is below and that which is above. When a man goes into deep sleep, no enlightenment does come. But when a man goes into Samadhi, if he goes into it a fool, he comes out a sage." (Vol. I, p. 180)

The question has often been asked: What is the good of all this superconscious experience called Samadhi either to the average citizen or to the society at large? It is quite as good or as useless as any acrobatic feat may be. Does the yogi help society any way by his frequent immersions in *Samadhi*? *Samadhi* may perhaps be a very fine experience for the many of those yogis who have trained themselves for it, but of what good is it to society? In short, what is the application of the principle of Samadhi? Samadhi, in theory, may be alright, but what is its application? That theory is worthless which is found wanting at the moment of application. If the ideal fails us at the time of practice what good is that ideal? And if the application is impossible of the experiences of superconscious states to the problems of everyday life, then even the much boasted Samadhi falls to the ground. Says he:—

"The application of the idea of Samadhi is this. The field of reason or of the conscious workings of the mind is narrow and limited. There is a little circle within which the

human reason must move. It cannot go beyond. Yet it is beyond this circle of reason that there lies all that humanity holds most dear. All these questions, whether there is an immortal soul, whether there is a God, whether there is any supreme intelligence guiding the universe or not, are beyond the field of reason. Yet these questions are so important to us. All our ethical theories, all our moral attitudes, all that is good or great in human nature have been moulded upon answers that have come from beyond the circle. All ethics, all human action, all human thought hang upon this one idea of unselfishness. Where did those that preached unselfishness get this idea?

"To get any reason out of the mass of incongruity we call human life, we have to transcend our reason, but we must do it, scientifically, slowly, by regular practice, and we must cast off all superstition. We must take up the study of the superconscious state just as any other science. On reason we must have to lay our foundation, we must follow reason as far as it leads, and when reason fails, reason will itself show us the way to the highest plane. The three states, the instinct, reason and superconscious states must never contradict each other. They belong to one and the same mind." (Vol. I, pp. 184-85) //

Democrat of democrats that he was, the Swami held that the superconscious state of mind was the birthright of every individual, nay, of every animal; and that unless and until every one for himself realized the highest truth, it was no good to merely discuss or hear propositions. So the gospel that the Swami held before all was that the gates of the Samadhi were open to all. Given faith, given health, given perseverance, any person can expect to attain the highest state of life. And unless and until he did so he had no right to say that he was leading a religious life.

Thus has Swamiji summed up his position with regard to Rajayoga, the yoga of concentration:—

"When by previous preparation, it becomes strong and controlled and has the power of finer perception, the mind should be employed in meditation. This

meditation should begin with gross objects and slowly rise to finer and finer until it becomes objectless. The mind should first be employed in perceiving the external causes of sensations, then the internal motions and then its own reaction. When it has succeeded in perceiving the external causes of sensations by themselves, the mind will acquire the power of perceiving all fine material existences, all fine bodies and forms. When it can succeed in perceiving the motions inside by themselves, it will gain the control of all mental waves, in itself or in others, even before they have translated themselves into physical energy ; and when he will be able to perceive mental reaction by itself, the yogi will acquire the knowledge of everything, as every sensible object and every thought is the result of this reaction. Then will he have seen the very foundations of his mind and it will be under his perfect control. Different powers will come to the yogi and if he yields to the temptation of any of these, the road to his further progress will be barred. But if he is strong enough to reject even these miraculous powers, he will attain the goal of the yoga, the complete suppression of the waves in the ocean of the mind. Then the glory of the soul, undisturbed by the distractions of the mind or motions of the body will shine in its full effulgence ; and the yogi will find himself as he is and he always was, the essence of knowledge, the immortal, the all-pervading." (Vol. I, pp. 187-88)

This mental state is the highest that can be conceived and the Swami declared that each and every one of us is entitled to it. He went one step further and declared that unless we attained this state and came face to face as it were with knowledge and Reality, religion does not begin for us. We consider ourselves to be very religious. But what are we ? We are no better than the rank atheists, for both of us are strangers to the truth ; may be we have some intellectual perception of the truth which the atheist has not, but this makes very little difference. What is required is the experience of the superconscious state, the experience of all that lies beyond the domain of matter. When that experience comes, a man has



achieved illumination. What is concentration good for save to bring us this experience? asks the Swami. Concentration is the means and Samadhi is the goal of the science of Rajayoga. Once a man has attained Samadhi, once he has leaped over the wall of matter and experienced truths which lie beyond the range of the senses, then he has truly fulfilled the mission of his life and the acme of his ambition is fulfilled.

So then this is the science of Rajayoga. Many practices are prescribed, many steps are detailed. We must resolutely work them out. We must not allow despair to seize hold of us even when the path appears winding and full of trouble. We must keep to it and if we are brave enough to come out of our despair and disappointments, then only we are sure to succeed. Says the Swami:—

“Each one of the steps to attain Samadhi has been reasoned out, properly adjusted, scientifically organized, and when faithfully practised will surely lead us to the desired end. Then will all sorrows cease, all miseries vanish, the seeds for actions will be burned and the soul will be free for ever.” (Vol. I, p. 188)

There was one scientific-looking objection raised against Rajayoga which here deserves passing mention because it shows how very plausible even our prejudices can look if they can be clothed in scientific terminology. The tragedy of our present state of life is this that, though really we ought to be ashamed of it, we seem to think that it is the highest state conceivable. The tragedy of our sense life is this that we seem to consider that an incessant receiving of sense impressions is the highest state conceivable for a man. When therefore the Rajayogi claims samadhi as the real goal of mankind and not perpetual life of this sense play, at once he is received in the western scientific world with a howl of condemnation or opposition. Is this attitude reasonable? Is it justifiable? Or is it mere clinging to sense life under the garb of modern science and philosophy? With a keen capacity for analysis and synthesis, the Swami has satisfactorily replied to this point in his characteristic manner. Says he:—

"It seems the consensus of opinion of the great minds of the world and it has been nearly demonstrated by researches into physical nature that we are the outcome and manifestation of an absolute condition, back of our present relative condition and are going forward to return to that absolute. This being granted the question is, Which is better—the absolute or this state? There are not people wanting who think that this manifested state is the highest state of man. Thinkers of great calibre are of opinion that we are manifestations of undifferentiated being and the differentiated state is higher than the absolute. They imagine that, in the absolute, there cannot be any quality, that it must be insensate, dull, and lifeless, that only this life can be enjoyed and therefore we must cling to it. So the question is, 'Is going back to God the higher state or not?'

"The philosophers of the yoga school emphatically answer that it is. They say that man's present state is degeneration. Man comes from God in the beginning, in the middle he becomes man, in the end he goes back to God. This is the method of putting it in the Dualistic form. The Monistic form is that man is God and goes back to Him again. The really difficult part to understand is that this state, the absolute, which has been called the Highest, is not as some fear that of the Zoophyte or of the stone. According to them there are only two states of existence one of stone and the other of thought. What right have they to limit existence to these two? Is there not something infinitely superior to thought? Is the thoughtlessness of the stone, the same as the thoughtlessness of God? These philosophers think it is awful if we go beyond thought.

"There are much higher states of existence beyond reasoning. It is really beyond the intellect that the first state of religious life is to be found. When you step beyond thought and intellect and all reasoning, then you have made the first step towards God; and that is the beginning of life. Kant has proved beyond all doubt that we cannot penetrate beyond the tremendous dead wall called reason. But that is the very first idea upon which

all Indian thought takes its stand, and dares to seek, and succeeds in finding, something higher than reason, where alone the explanation of the present state is to be found." ( Vol. I, pp. 198-99 )

Swamiji's discourses on Rajayoga considerably impressed the American scholars in whose estimation Indian thought distinctly rose. They began to think that a country which could boast such a scientifically demonstrable form of God Realization must have developed science, culture and metaphysics to a wonderful degree. Several of the American scientists invited the Swami for further discussion and, in the light of these discussions, were able to learn much from the Swami. On his Indian audience, the effect of Swamiji's discourses was still more wonderful. And as a result of them, the study of Rajayoga in India got an impetus and even now, after the lapse of nearly forty years, the interest of the Indian mind in Rajayoga is as fresh as ever. That the Swami was able to perform this miracle is itself no small tribute to his eloquence, to his scientific versatility, to his mastery in exposition and, last but not least, to the burning fire of his noble Faith.

## CHAPTER VII

### PRACTICAL VEDANTA

Since times immemorial, two views have been held of the ideal in its relation to the real or actual or practical. One view is that the ideal is so immeasurably superior to and removed from the practical, that for everyday purposes, there could be very little relation between the two. If the ideal could be proximate to the real, if the ideal could be translated in terms of the practical, surely then it is no ideal. It may be far removed from the real and the practical, it may undoubtedly and decidedly be superior to the practical; but after all it is not the ideal. That ideal which can be reached or approached is no ideal. Either it is not an ideal or it cannot be reached and approached.

To this the Practicalists are opposed. They say, if the ideal is so absolutely removed from the practical, what is the good, to say the least, of having the ideal? Is the ideal a dream, a fantasy, a poet's pigment of imagination, a beautiful lullaby for the troublesome imp of the intellect, or is it going to serve some definite purpose in the existence of the practical? The sun is immeasurably above us but even he gives us light and heat and can be made to serve in the chemist's laboratory. If your ideal is still more removed from the practical, then we don't care to have that ideal. It may be a fine theory. It may amuse our intellect. It may fill up our leisure hours, but it cannot guide our lives and as such it has to be discarded.

Years ago, Mahatma Gandhi declared, in reply to a public criticism, that he was a practical idealist. At once his critics rushed upon him saying how he could be a practical man if he was an idealist, and an idealist if he was a practical man. Just as two infinities are impossible, just as two straight lines cannot occupy the same space, so is the case with a practical idealist. A practical idealist is yet to be born and human society has lived for at least several thousand years. Well may we wait for the practical idealist to be born till fairly the deluge is on us.

So then one school of thought holds that a practical idealist is a contradiction in terms while the other saddles upon the ideal the duty and responsibility of translating itself into practicality on pain and penalty of repudiation. Which is the more correct view ? Which view will find general acceptance ? Which view stands more to reason ? Which view is more conducive to human good ? These are the baffling questions that seek to claim solution at our hands. Let us see how Swamiji has replied to these points.

When Swamiji was in the west teaching Vedanta, he was invariably assailed with the question—‘Is Vedanta practical ?’ The practical genius of the west felt that it discovered this one flaw in Vedanta which otherwise seemed to be a perfectly rationalistic and philosophical religion, a religion which stood the test of science and research. Hence it exultingly pointed out this flaw to the Swami. ‘Swamiji,’ his hearers would assail him with the question, ‘Is Vedanta practical ?’ But they counted without their host and got the following rebuke from the Swami :—

“Is it practical?—is another question. Can it be practised in modern society ? Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to truth or to die. Societies should be moulded upon truth. Truth has not to adjust itself to society. If such a noble truth as unselfishness cannot be practised in society, it is better for a man to give up society and go into the forest. What good is it to talk of the strength of your muscles, of the superiority of your western institutions, if you cannot make truth square with your society, if you cannot build up a society in which the highest truth will fit ? What is the good of this boastful talk about your grandeur and greatness if you stand up and say ‘This is not practical’ ? Is nothing practical but pounds, shillings and pence ? That society is greatest where the greatest truths become practical ; and if society is not fit for the highest truth make it so and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the truth, dare to practise the truth. Practise that boldness which dares know the truth, which dares show the truth in life, which

does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is the spirit, that in the whole universe, nothing can kill him. Then you will be free." (Vol. II, pp. 84-5)

Every society is full of worldly-wise people to whom anything like idealism and nobility is arrant folly and who plume themselves as the sole repositories of wisdom and skill. They are successful men as the word goes and believe that the means they adopted for the success were really necessary and hence, right or wrong, had to be adopted. They are fully convinced that formed as the world is, it is necessary to water down or even shed our idealism if we are to have some share in the big scramble for the good things of the world that is going on. They push their way, they elbow their way through, regardless of any other governing principle. The voice of conscience has been so often and so ruthlessly stifled by them that it is now completely stilled. Everything is fair in war is their motto. If I hesitate, if I show scruples, if I try to fashion my conduct on principles of idealism, I shall lose the race. Hence it is necessary to throw every consideration to the wind so the race is won. That is their logic, if logic it could be called. Accept their premises and hardly you will resist their conclusion. The good things of the world are necessary. This is premise number one. The race for these must be won; premise number two. The world is bad and competition of others is cruel and unscrupulous; premise number three. Accept all these premises and then escape the conclusion, if you can, that you too must suit your conduct to that of other grabbing and rapacious people. Such people are generally successful. That credit at least has to be given to them, and knowing that they have earned success of a high cast, they seek to silence the voice of God in their heart by calling all idealism as school-boy morality. It is these people who mostly laugh at Vedanta as being unpractical.

Is there no choice between inactive idealism and shameless practicalism? If a man chooses to live in the world is he offered choice between sainthood and blackguardism? Should he not be allowed to follow a middle

course ? Can he not remain honest, pure and noble, and yet have a hand at, and take a share in, the good things of this life ? Is society good enough to allow a few honest spiritual men to earn their living and conform to their ideals ? Is there anything like defensive and honest cunning ? Can a spiritual man protect himself from the incursions of less scrupulous persons ? Can the day-to-day activities be done, 'in the great Task-Master's eye' ? Does the path of spiritual idealism branch off at least now and then to even a modicum degree and measure of worldly success ? These are the questions to which our inquiry leads us and for which humanity is waiting for an answer. The Swami declares that the Vedanta is good enough and easy enough to serve as an ideal even to those who live in the turmoil of society. The idealism of Vedanta, he thought to be fairly consistent with the ordinary exercise of the householder's functions in society. Says he :—

"The Vedanta preaches the ideal, and the ideal is, as we know, always far ahead of the real, of the practical as we may call it. There are two tendencies in human nature, one to harmonize the ideal with the life, and the other to elevate the life to the ideal. It is a great thing to understand this for the former tendency is the temptation of our lives. If a man comes to preach to me a certain ideal, and the first step towards it is to give up selfishness, to give up enjoyment, I think that is impracticable. But when a man brings an ideal which can be reconciled with my selfishness, I am glad at once and jump at it. If I am a shopkeeper I think shopkeeping the only practical pursuit in the world. You see how we all use this word practical for things we like and can do. Therefore I will ask you to understand that Vedanta, though it is intensely practical, is always so in the sense of the ideal. It does not preach an impossible ideal, however high it is, and it is high enough for an ideal. It not only insists that the ideal is practical but that it has been so all the time and this Ideal, this Reality is our own nature. [In the Vedanta there is no attempt at reconciling the present life, the hypnotised life, this false life with the ideal, but this false life must go and the real life which is always existing

must manifest itself, must shine out. The Vedanta says that not only can this be realized in the depths of forests or caves but by men in all conditions of life. The actual should be reconciled to the ideal, the present life should be made to coincide with the life eternal." (Vol. II, pp. 292-95)

The real point is this. There are several qualities which are essential for success in a worldly sense. Leaving aside the case of the unscrupulous worldly-wise man referred to above, who found no halfway house between sainthood and scoundralism, the question occurs, can qualities like ambition, aggressiveness, personality, adroitness, slimness (to use the word in its good sense) presence of mind, skill, far-sightedness, shrewdness, deftness, diplomacy, tact, knowledge of human nature—all or most of which are required more or less for success in a worldly sense—are these qualities compatible with the spirit of Vedanta? It will be seen we have deliberately omitted qualities as wickedness, unscrupulousness, cunning and the like and selected only such in whose favour a kind of point can be stretched. If the existence of these qualities will be proved to be compatible with the spirit of practical Vedanta, then the question that we commenced with is answered in the affirmative. But if these qualities do not suitably mix with higher spiritual qualities, then naturally practical Vedanta is a contradiction in terms, a dream, a mirage.

How shall we discuss and answer this serious problem except by illustrating the point with a striking example? Let us consider the life of Tukaram, the Maratha saint. As his later life proves, he was a man of deep and invulnerable Vairagya. He was living the life of a householder. He had a wife and children, friends and disciples. Can he be styled to be a practical Vedantin? Apparently the answer is to be in the affirmative. But if we go deeper we shall have, at least in another sense, to deny this title to him. Before his mind was turned to Vedanta he suffered a tremendous reverse in the shop which he was running. If Tukaram could not conduct an ordinary grocer's shop, how can we say that he was full of the spirit of



practical Vedanta? We expect a practical Vedantin no doubt to run his stores in a spirit of perfect honesty. But we do not expect him to be overtrustful, careless, falsely optimistic, easily deceived, ignorant of the ways of the world, indifferent to his worldly good, guileless, all of which Tukaram was and if Tukaram suffered reverse to his fortune it was not really out of his high idealism but most probably for the defects in his character just noted.

Are these and like defects the necessary accompaniments of a spiritually disposed mind? If they are, then practical Vedanta is an impossibility. Fortunately they are not necessarily so. We have seen in the lives of practical Vedantins like Janaka, Shri Krishna, Yudhishtira, Bhishma, Buddha, Ramdas, that these defects in the armour of their characters were not noticeable and that on the whole they led successful lives. Therefore we can truly say that Practical Vedanta is not an impossibility.

However we must make our position still clearer and for that purpose modify it also to a little extent. If we divide spiritual men or Vedantins into three classes for the sake of the ideal, we shall have to leave aside out of count persons belonging to class first. Says the Swami:—

“The highest man *cannot* work, for there is no binding element, no attachment to ignorance in him. It is in ignorance that struggle remains. Real theists could not work. We are atheists more or less. The greatest men in the world have passed away unknown. The Buddhas and the Christs that we know are but second-rate heroes in comparison with the greatest men of whom the world knows nothing. Silently they live and silently they pass away. They are the pure sattvics who can never make any stir but only melt down in love. They are too near the Lord to be active and to fight, to be working, struggling, preaching and doing good here, as they say, to humanity. The active workers, however good, have still a little remnant of ignorance left in them. When our nature yet has some impurities, then alone can we work. In the presence of an ever active providence, who notes even the sparrows fall, how can he attach any importance to his own work? Will it not be a blasphemy to do so when we know He

is caring for the minutest thing in the world? We have only to stand in awe and reverence, saying 'Thy will be done'." (Vol. I, pp. 104-05)

If we leave aside these people who are in fact more Vedanta embodied than Vedantins and who hence cannot be expected to be practical, we have to deal with two classes of people. Of these great saints, apostles, rishis, Bhaktas etc. form one class. It is not for ordinary mortals to lay down rule for them. They are practical Vedantins no doubt but they are so, in their own unique and sublime way. Our main purpose in this chapter is to discuss the problem as it affects men of average capacities and capabilities, men who though ordinary have set before themselves the high ideal of Vedanta, but who are not willing to read Vedanta and then forget all about it but who want to use and apply Vedanta to their daily and hourly need. It is for such people the problem really arises and it is people of this class who have to say whether Vedanta is practical or not practical. On their answer depends the solution of this question.

The first thing that a practical Vedantin has to do is to fill himself with the ideal. He has to attune his conduct with the ideal. But he has to sound and resound the ideal in his brain. He has to think of the ideal, dream of it. His talk, his leisure, his wakeful moments, his everything must show his intense preoccupation with the ideal. That is the first step. Says the Swami:—

"In one word, this ideal is that you are divine. 'Thou art that' this is the essence of Vedanta; after all its ramifications and intellectual gymnastics you know the human soul to be pure and omniscient; you see that such superstitions as birth and death would be entire nonsense when spoken in connection with the soul. (We can do anything. /The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first./ As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe a personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist.) 'Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism. There is neither man nor woman nor child,

nor difference of sex, not anything that stands as a bar to the realization of the ideal, because the Vedanta shows that it is realized already, it is already there.

"All the powers in the Universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes, and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Darkness never existed, wickedness never existed, weakness never existed. We who are fools cry that we are impure. Thus Vedanta not only insists that the ideal is practical but that it has been so all the time, and this ideal, this reality is our own nature. As soon as you say 'I am a little mortal being' you are saying something which is not true, you are giving the lie to yourself, you are hypnotizing yourselves into something vile, weak and wretched.

"It recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error; and the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak that you are a sinner, a miserable creature and that you have no power and you cannot do this, and that. Every time you think in that way, you, as it were, rivet one more link in the chain that binds you down, you add one more layer of hypnotism on your own soul. Therefore whosoever thinks that he is weak, is wrong, whosoever thinks that he is impure is wrong, and is throwing a bad thought into the world." (Vol. II, pp. 291-93)

These are very important points to remember. In the hurry and bustle of our everyday life we are apt to forget them and yield to the inevitable weaknesses and inevitable temptations. We are all caught in the network of maya and are apt to think in terms more of matter than of spirit. So it is quite natural for us to forget our Divine nature. But if we really want to be Practical Vedantins, we must resolutely see that the ideal is iterated and reiterated till it is fully and wholly absorbed by us to its last drop. What the Swami insisted upon was (1) we are Divine (2) we are Pure (3) we are all-powerful (4) Hence we should have faith in ourselves. These little four propositions, if fully understood, firmly remembered and practically used are bound to revolutionize our lives. Again and again does the Swami revert to this one grand ideal

of faith in ourselves. It is the one theme he was never tired of speaking on. It was the one message which he liked to deliver to the young men of the world. It was the one message which he wanted to give to the men and women of India. It was the one message he felt himself sent on earth for. Says the Swami :—

“The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great. Let a man go down as low as possible. There must come a time when out of sheer desperation, he will take an upward curve and will learn to have faith in himself. But it is better that we should know it from the first ! Why should we have all these bitter experiences in order to gain faith in ourselves ? Faith in ourselves will do everything. I have experienced it in my own life, and am still doing so, and as I grow older that faith is becoming stronger and stronger. (He is an atheist who does not believe in himself.) The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. ) But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedanta again is the doctrine of Oneness. It means faith in all because you are all. Do you know how much energy, how many powers, how many forces are still lurking behind that frame of yours ? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.” (Vol. II, pp. 299-300)

So then faith in oneself is the first step in practical Vedanta. It will at once lift up our life from the slough of despond right up to the heights of glory and prosperity. Swamiji's wide experience told him that only those individuals, societies, nations and institutions which believe in themselves achieve success in life ; the rest go to eternal damnation. Swamiji found that though Christianity as a

religion preached that man is a sinner, a hopelessly fallen sinner, still western nations were endowed with an abundant measure of faith in themselves; and it was this measure of faith in themselves that enabled the westerners to rule over five continents. The Swami found that an English boy thought that he was an Englishman and that he would do anything. But what he regretted to find was that not only our Indian boys but also their fathers would be able to say the same thing. And this in spite of the fact that the Indians had such a glorious religion like Vedanta which taught to them the doctrine of Faith. (Therefore the Swami thought that the situation demanded that we should revive this ancient theme of faith and he thought that the preaching of this doctrine of Shraddha was the mission of his life.) The Swami roamed from one end of the Indian continent to the other but he was deeply pained and disappointed to find that nowhere was this doctrine of Shraddha properly understood. And therefore (he wanted to encourage the study of the Gita and of the Upanishads because they preached the doctrine of faith.) When we find that the Swami goes to the extent of calling the disbelievers in the doctrine of faith by the name of atheists, we can understand what an emphasis he desired to place upon it. (He also went to the extent of saying that if Indians had faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of gods of our mythology and all the gods which the foreigners introduced into our midst and had no faith in ourselves, there was no hope for us. Hence the need of the revival of the doctrine of Hope, of Faith.)

Just as the Swami laid great stress on Shraddha as an important factor in practical Vedanta, similarly he considered passionless work to be of the utmost importance to the practical Vedantist. In the early stages of a man's growth he thinks that passionless work is work without enthusiasm because he commits the mistake of thinking passion and enthusiasm to be identical. But this is a great mistake. It is only work without passion, without attachment, that is best done. It is only the work where the work and worker are closely identified

and where no mental excitement fatigues the worker that is best done. Says the Swami:—

“I have been asked many times how we can work if we do not have the passion which we generally feel for the work. I also thought in that way years ago but as I am growing older, getting more experience, I find it is not true. The less passion there is, the better we work. The calmer we are, the better for us, and the more amount of work we can do. When we let loose our feelings, we waste so much energy, shatter our nerves, disturb our minds, and accomplish very little work. The energy which ought to have gone out as work is spent as mere feeling, which counts for nothing. It is only when the mind is very calm and collected that the whole of its energy is spent in doing good work. And if you read the lives of the great workers which the world has produced, you will find that they were wonderfully calm men. Nothing, as it were, could throw them off the balance. That is why the man who becomes angry, never does a great amount of work, and the man whom nothing can make angry accomplishes so much. The man who gives way to anger or hatred or any passion cannot work, he only breaks himself to pieces, and does nothing practical. It is the calm, forgiving, equable, well-balanced mind that does the greatest amount of work.† Real activity which is the goal of Vedanta, is combined with eternal calmness, the calmness which cannot be ruffled, the balance of mind which is never disturbed whatever happens. And we all know from our experience in life that that is the best attitude for work.” (Vol. II, pp. 290-91)

One reason why people are so much excited is that they are so uncertain and hence in so much suspense about the result. And this nervousness about the future has its own reaction on the work of the present. It also takes away from the efficiency of the work. No work which is done under stress of emotion or anxiety can be efficient. The wonder is that it is done. Secondly as the Swami truly observes, passion at and before work-time means so much dissipation of precious energy that ought to have been conserved for work. Hence the

insistence of the practical Vedantin on work without passion and hence without attachment.) The stock difficulty about the possibility of work being done without excitement can be easily dispelled if we study biography. The greatest commanders have issued orders with extraordinary calmness on occasions calculated and destined to seal their fate this way or that way. The greatest statesmen have delivered and devised gigantic diplomatic strokes with utmost calmness. Diplomats are known to be all smiles and deliberately trained not only to suppress but to prevent any mental excitement from disturbing their minds.

This general insistence of the crowd on work with passion or excitement seems perhaps to be the result of a false analogy. Orators are known to sway their audiences by extraordinary display of passion. The impassioned words and gestures of an orator acting on a responsive audience do create stir and even passion but more often than not, these are words of *calculated* passion, and the mind of the orator is as calm as ever. It is only the poet, the artist, the dramatist whose heated imagination brings down inspiration but leaving aside this solitary exception, it will have to be admitted, that the calmer we are, the better is our work, and hence the practical Vedantin is perfectly right when he insists on passionless, unattached work.

The third mental quality which the practical Vedantin is bent upon developing is unselfishness. Now unselfishness is the highest mental quality which leads us to spirituality. The difference between the spiritual man and the worldly man consists in this, that the worldly man is intensely selfish and the spiritual man is intensely unselfish. Says the Swami :—

“The watchword of all well-being is not ‘I’ but ‘thou’! Who cares whether there is a heaven or hell, who cares if there is a soul or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. The highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conceptions. You need not

lower your conceptions to get ethics and morality. On the other hand, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions.

"The struggle to reach freedom is the groundwork of all morality, of unselfishness, which means getting rid of the idea that men are the same as their little body. When we see a man doing good work, helping others, it means he cannot be confined within the limited circle of 'me and mine'. There is no limit to this getting out of selfishness. All the great systems of ethics preach absolute unselfishness as the goal. Every selfish action retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal. That which is selfish is immoral, that which is unselfish is moral." (Vol I, pp. 107-08)

"All ethics, all human action, and all human thought hang upon this one idea of unselfishness. The whole idea of human life can be put into that one word, unselfishness. Why should we be unselfish? Where is the necessity, the force, the power of my being unselfish? You call yourself a rational man, a utilitarian, but if you do not show me a reason for utility, I say you are irrational. Show me the reason why I should not be selfish. To ask one to be unselfish may be good as poetry but poetry is not reason. Where is the utility of my being unselfish? The answer is that this world is only one drop in an infinite ocean, one link in an infinite chain. Where did those that preached unselfishness and taught it to the human race, get this idea from? Realization through samadhi is the only answer." (Vol. I, pp. 182-83)

So then unselfishness in the conduct of a practical vedantist is the result of his intellectual and emotional as also spiritual perception of the truth that the whole world is one and that not only are men brothers but identical. In helping another, I am helping myself; in doing good to another, I am doing good to myself only. It is therefore quite natural that this unselfishness should both be the cause and the result of love which we see so striking an element in the mental make-up of a practical vedantist. (The heart of the practical vedantist is always full



of love overflowing for the world and its erring people at large.) Says the Swami:—

“You remember that passage in the sermon of Buddha how he sent a thought of love towards the south, the north, the east and the west, above and below, until the whole universe was filled with this love, so grand, great and infinite. When you have that feeling you have true personality. The whole universe is one person. Let go the little things. Give up the small for the Infinite.” (Vol. II, p. 321)

“Love binds, love makes for that oneness; you become one, the mother with child, families with the city, the whole world becomes one with the animals. For love is Existence, God Himself, and all this is the manifestation of that One Love throughout. Therefore, in all our actions, we have to judge whether it is making for diversity or for oneness. If for diversity, we have to give it up, but if it makes for oneness we are sure it is good. So with our thoughts.

“The whole idea of ethics is that it does not depend on anything unknowable, it does not teach anything unknown, but, in the language of the Upanishad ‘the God whom we worship as an unknown God, the same I preach unto thee.’ It is through the self that you know anything. The self is known therefore to every one of us, man, woman or child. Without knowing him, we can neither live nor move. (The God of the Vedanta is the most known of all and is not the outcome of imagination. If this is not preaching a practical God, how else could you teach a practical God? Where is the more practical God than He, whom I see before me, a God omnipresent, in every being, more real than our senses?” (Vol. II, pp 302-03)

Just as this consciousness, perception and realization of the Oneness of the Universe creates in us feelings of unselfishness leading to Love Divine, so also, at the other end, it brings forth all the latent manhood that in us resides. The practical Vedantin is no weak-minded, cringing, fatalistic man. He relies upon his mental and moral strength. He feels that the whole world is indivisible and that behind him is the omnipotent God. Just as the wave

in the ocean has as its background the limitless ocean, just as a policeman of the British Empire feels that the power of the mighty empire will protect him in all his actions, so also the practical Vedantin feels in him the strength of the universe, the strength of God. (Hence he is manly, sturdy, strong, optimistic, ever active, ever alert. Weakness does not invade him. Sin does not touch him. Fear does not assail him. Weakness, sin, fear, melt away before the consciousness of strength which he feels every minute. He has drunk of the cup divine. That is why he is ever ready to face dangers, defeats, even death with courage, and equanimity which is the fruit of courage. The Swami insists on this idea of strength again and again. He returns to it again and again. Faith and strength—in these two words we can sum up the gospel of the Swami.

Says the Swami: "Are you strong? Do you feel strength?—for I know it is truth alone that gives strength, I know that truth alone gives life and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach truth until he is strong. Every system therefore which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, I do not like. Strength is the one thing needful, strength is the medicine for the world's disease. Strength is the weapon which the poor must have when tyrannized over by the rich. It is the medicine which sinners must have when tyrannized over by other sinners. Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest, as when all the responsibility is thrown upon ourselves. I challenge every one of you. How will you behave if I put a little baby in your hands? Your whole life will be changed for the moment. Whatever you may be, you must become selfless for the time being. So if the whole responsibility is thrown upon our shoulders, we shall be at our highest and best, when we have nobody to grope towards, no devil to lay our blames upon, no personal God to carry our burdens; when we are alone responsible, then we shall rise to our highest and best. Then we shall be strong." (Vol. II, pp. 201-02)

How healthily and powerfully this idea of strength reacts when it is properly developed can be gathered from the following:—

"Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore and weary. For days and days I had had no food and often could walk no further. I would sink down under a tree and life would seem ebbing away. I could not speak, I could scarcely think, but at last the mind reverted to the idea 'I have no fear, no death. I never hunger nor thirst. I am it ! I am it ! The whole of nature cannot crush me. It is my servant. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of Lords and God of Gods ! Regain thy lost empire ! Arise, walk and stop not !' And I would rise up, reinvigorated and here am I living, to-day. Mountain-high though the difficulties appear, terrible and gloomy though all things seem, they are but Maya ; fear not, it is banished ! Crush it and it vanishes ! Stamp upon it and it dies ! Be not afraid ! Think not how many times you fail. Assert yourself again and again, and light must come ! " ( Vol. II, p. 401 )

This gospel of strength is the gospel of self-reliance, of optimism, of hope, of Bliss Eternal ! We are all crouching under the whip of fate, of fortune, of this and of that. But we do not know that all this that we are suffering or enjoying we have manufactured for ourselves. We do not know that every hour's happiness or misery that we enjoy or suffer is the result of Karma sown by us previously and that we can not only live down our past Karma but build for us a higher, nobler life. If we but know that we are the architects of our own fortune, what a wave of strength will sweep over our bodies ! what a glow of pride, of expectancy will suffuse our countenance ! Says the Swami :—

"We make our own destiny. His sun shines for the weak as well as for the strong. His wind blows for saints and sinners alike. We are like puppies, making life-and-death struggles here and foolishly thinking that God Himself will take it as seriously as we do. He knows what the puppies' play means. Our attempts to lay the blame on Him, making Him the punisher, and the rewarder, are only foolish. He neither punishes nor rewards any. His infinite mercy is open to every one. Upon us depends how we utilize it. When you find yourself suffering, blame

yourself and try to do better. This is the only solution of the problem. Blame none for your own faults, stand upon your own feet and take the whole responsibility upon yourself. Say 'This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing.' That which I created, I can demolish. Therefore stand up, be bold, be strong. All the strength and succour you want is within yourself. Make your own future. Let the past bury its dead. Your good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and forever." (Vol. II, pp. 224-25)

Thus man is the creator of himself. He is the architect of his own fortune. He has infinite capacities for expansion, he has infinite capacities for development. He can make and unmake himself. If he has been a sinner, he can yet be a saint. If he has lost one battle there is time enough for him to win another. If fate is not propitious to him, he can compel fate to become propitious. For the infinite power of good, of virtue, of efficiency, of expansion is in him. Why should he go to a corner and weep because he is a sinner? Why should he do that? Is it not in his own hands to change his nature and develop within himself the force of *Punya*? Can he not replace sin with *Punya*? Says the Swami:—

"Silly fools tell you that you are sinners and you sit down in a corner and weep. It is foolishness, wickedness, downright rascality to say that you are sinners. You are all God. See you not God and call Him man? Therefore if you dare, stand on that—mould your whole life on that! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak. (The soul is infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent.) Stand up! Assert yourselves, proclaim the God within you! Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism has been and is upon our race. Oh, ye modern Hindus, de-hypnotize yourselves. Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul to see how he awakes! (Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.) There is no more sin

for you ! There is no more misery for you." (Vol. III, pp. 192-93),

This is the outlook of the Practical Vedantin. With respect to the practical Vedantin, one thing that deserves mention is that he is thoroughgoing in his logic and analysis. He will call a spade a spade. He will not seek to cover the carcass with roses. He will not attempt to give a false colouring to the world. His is the dry light of knowledge and reasoning. He does not suit his logic to the needs and exigencies of the moment. (A patient observer, a close reasoner, a faithful sadhaka, that is the description of the Practical Vedantin. He does not see roses where only thorns abound.) He does not see thorns where only roses are to be found. He does not try to paint life in this world either as happy or as unhappy. He is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. There are persons who want to foretell a happy future for mankind because, they say, that would encourage people to live and work. They do not want to tell real facts to the world, fearing that they would take effort out of man. But the Swami was made of a sterner stuff, and practical Vedantin that he was, he showed how and why the perfect millennium is never likely to come. Says he:—

"In this world we find that all happiness is followed by misery as its shadow. Life has its shadow, death. They must go together because they are not contradictory, not two separate existences but different manifestations of the same unit, life and death, sorrow and happiness, good and evil. The dualistic conception that good and evil are two separate entities and that they are both going on eternally is absurd on the face of it. We can never have ultimately everything good on this earth and nothing bad. This may disappoint and frighten some of you but I cannot help it.

"The general argument against my statement and apparently a very convincing one is that in the course of evolution, all that is evil in what we see around us is gradually being eliminated and the result is that if this elimination continues for millions of years, a time will come when all the evil will have been extirpated and the good

alone will remain. But there is a fallacy in this argument and it is this. It takes for granted that both good and evil are things that are eternally fixed. But is it so? That the evils are being eliminated may be true, but if so, the good also must be dying out. But are not the evils multiplying fast and good diminishing if I may so put it? The Vedānta does not take the position of the world a miserable one. That would be untrue. At the same time, it is a mistake to say that this world is full of happiness and blessing.

“Thus the world is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It is a mixture of both and, as we go on, we shall find that the whole blame is taken away from nature and put on our shoulders. At the same time, the Vedānta shows the way out but not by denial of evil. It is not hopeless, it is not agnostic. It finds out a remedy but wants to place that remedy on adamant shoulders.” (Vol. II, pp. 179-81)

This is also the outlook of the Practical Vedāntin and this sturdy attitude is his strong point. He is not a shirker, he is not a waster or a rotter. He boldly, bravely and squarely faces the problem. We, as if to advertise our extreme preoccupation in important work, often complain of want of time and thus hide the lukewarmness of our nature. But in this we deceive only ourselves. If we ordinary men have to suffer from want of time and leisure, who is to be blessed with a fair share of leisure? And if we do not find leisure in vital matters to us what shall we say? Says the Swami:—

“The Vedānta says that not only can this be realized in the depths of forests or caves but by men in all possible conditions of life. We have seen that the people who discovered these truths were neither living in caves, nor forests, nor following the ordinary avocations of life, but men, who, we have every reason to believe, led the busiest of lives, men who had to command armies, to sit on thrones and look to the welfare of millions! Yet they could find time to think out all these thoughts, to realize them, and to teach them to humanity. How much more then should it be practical for us, whose lives compared with theirs are lives of leisure? My requirements are

nothing compared with those of an ancient absolute monarch. My wants are as nothing compared with the demands of Arjuna, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, commanding a huge army; and yet he could find time in the midst of the din and turmoil of battle to talk the highest philosophy and to carry it in his life also. Surely we ought to be able to do as much in this life of ours, comparatively free, easy, comfortable. With the amount of freedom we have, we can attain to two hundred ideals in this life if we will, but we must not degrade the ideal to the actual." (Vol. II, pp 293-94)

Nor like the agnostics does the practical Vedantin give up the struggle as hopeless. He knows this life is too valuable to be wasted thus and besides, having given up the struggle how is the practical Vedantin going to fill up his life? Is the void caused by the uprooting of the ideal likely to be filled by something equally precious? He is too seriously busy with the eternal problem to give up the inquiry in a fit of petulance. Says the Swami:—

"Our evil is of no less value than our good; and our good is of no more value than our evil. They are bound together. If this is the state of things what shall we do? Why not become agnostics? The modern agnostics also know that there is no solution of this problem, no getting out of this evil of Maya. Therefore they tell us to be satisfied and enjoy life. Here again is a mistake, a tremendous mistake, a most illogical mistake. And it is this. What do you mean by life? Do you mean only the life of the senses? In this everyone of us differs only slightly from the brutes. Then this present life means something more than that. Our feelings, thoughts and aspirations are all part and parcel of our life; and is not the struggle towards the great ideal, towards perfection, one of the most important components of what we call life? According to the agnostics, we must enjoy life as it is. But this life means after all, this search after the ideal. The essence of life is going to perfection. We must have that and therefore we cannot be agnostics or take the world as it appears. The agnostic position takes this life minus the ideal component, to be all that exists

and this he claims cannot be reached, therefore he must give up the search." (Vol. II, pp. 101-02)

But the practical Vedantist refuses to give up the struggle. An agnostic can give up the struggle and fill up his life with a round of sense enjoyments, but can the practical Vedantin do the same? He cannot! Even if his search is unavailing or fatiguing, he cannot give it up for any other, for he has already lost charm for anything else. If he can succeed in the ideal, then he wants that success. But if he fails therein, he does not care for any other kind of success. With this resolute and unbending nature, he is sure to reach his goal. He has discovered correct methods and what remains for him only is the necessary effort. The Swami was of opinion that the correct and proper attitude for the practical Vedantin was of the spectator or witness of the God's show. He should work by all means but he should not be caught in the work. Says he:—

"If we understand the giving up of the world in the old crude sense, then it would come to this : that we must not work, that we must be idle, sitting like lumps of earth ; neither thinking nor doing anything, but must become fatalists, driven about by every circumstance, ordered about by the laws of nature, drifting from place to place. He alone enjoys who is not propelled by his desires, by any selfishness whatever. He enjoys who has no ulterior motive in view, nothing to gain from work.

"Who enjoys the picture, the seller or the seer? The seller is busy with his accounts, computing what his gain will be. He is looking at the hammer, and watching the bids. That man is enjoying the picture who has gone there without any intention of buying or selling. He looks at the picture and enjoys it. So this whole is a picture and when these desires have vanished, men will enjoy the world and then this buying and selling and these foolish ideas of possession will be ended. Be the witness! Be the seer and then you will enjoy the play of God!" (Vol. II, p. 149)

"Do not mix in the fray, hold yourself as a witness and go on working. • My master used to say 'Look upon



your children as a nurse does.' The nurse will take your baby and fondle it and play with it and behave towards it as gently as if it were her only child; but as soon as you give her notice to quit, she is ready to start off with bag and baggage from the house." (Vol. I, pp. 86-7)

So just as oil and water never mix, so should be the attitude of the practical Vedantin with respect to the affairs of the world. He should be in the world but not of it. He should live in the world but should not be engrossed by its activities in such a manner that the clinging for this world should remain in him. He does everything that externally the attached man does but the spirit is entirely changed; the clinging is gone, the passion has calmed down; the urge of the senses has abated, the impurity of the mind has burnt out. The same man who embraced his wife has embraced his grown up daughter! But what a difference in the two outwardly same kinds of acts! In one case, it was the love of the husband in which the sexual instinct plays part; in the other kind of embrace, it was love, love and everytime love but there was no room for the sexual instinct. The practical Vedantin hugs the world as a father hugs his grown up daughter. There is love but all spiritual, paternal love. There is no room for any other kind of love. This purified, sublimated love is what is required.

So what is required to be abandoned is the kind of proprietorship or ownership which we have been feeling all along since our very childhood. But this world does not belong to us. It is God's. It belongs to no mortal. Hence it is mere impertinence on my part to appropriate its ownership and behave as if I and the world are inseparably joined. Is that so? The practical Vedantin replies that it is not so. I can as well withdraw myself from the world and yet the world goes on. If I die to-morrow, the world still will continue its even course. Not a ripple will be created by my sudden death. So, then, the practical Vedantin says we ordinary, attached mortals are guilty of a double fallacy. In the first place this world is Maya, delusion, unreality. It has no existence in fact. So my attachment for my clinging to the world of delusion is all

foolish ; and then Maya or dream or illusion or whatever it is, it does not belong to me. What I can do or should do is to cling close to the Reality, see God in everything and then continue to remain in the world as before. Says the Swami :—

“Give up the world we have been thinking of so long, the world to which we have been clinging so long, the false world of our own creation. Give that up ! Open your eyes and see that as such it never existed. It was a dream, Mâyâ. What existed was the Lord Himself. It is He who is in the child, in the wife, in the husband ! It is He who is in the good and in the bad. He is in the sin and in the sinner. He is in life. He is in death.

“A tremendous assertion indeed ! Yet that is the theme which the Vedanta wants to demonstrate, to teach and to preach.

“We all understand that desires are wrong ; but what is meant by giving up desires ? How could life go on ? It would be the same suicidal advice, killing the desire and man too ! The solution is not that you should not have property. Not that you should not have things which are necessary and things which are even luxuries. Have all that you want and more, only know the truth and realize it. Wealth does not belong to anybody. Have no idea of proprietorship, possessorship. All belongs to the Lord. Let us put the Lord in everything. God is in the wealth that you enjoy. He is in the desire that rises in your mind. He is in the things you buy to satisfy your desire. He is in your beautiful attire, in your beautiful ornaments. All will be metamorphosized as soon as you begin to see things in that light. If you put God in your every movement, in your conversation, in your form, in your everything, the whole scene changes and the world, instead of appearing as one of woe and misery, will become a heaven.

“Put God in everything. Know Him to be everything. Work incessantly holding life as something deified, as God Himself and knowing that this is all we have to do. Desire to live a hundred years, have all earthly desires, if you wish ! Only deify them, convert them into heaven.

Have the desire to live a long life of helpfulness, of blissfulness, and activity on this earth. Thus working you will find the way out. If a man plunges headlong into foolish luxuries of the world without knowing the truth, he has missed his footing, he cannot reach the goal. And if a man curses the world, goes into a forest, mortifies his flesh, and kills himself little by little, makes his heart a barren waste, kills out all feeling and becomes harsh, stern and dried-up, that man also has missed the way. These are the two extremes: both have lost their way, both have missed the goal." (Vol. II, pp. 148-50)

This is the position of the practical Vedantin. It is a very difficult position, no doubt. But whoever said that religion or realization were easy? Whoever said that the putting of God into everything was an easy thing? Had it been easy, would not all have practised it? Had Religion and Realization been as attractive as the pursuit of sense pleasures, would we not have all of us been religious? But the practical Vedantin is sturdy, enterprising and one not easily cowed down by failure. He is brave enough and a perfect believer in the poet who said 'We fall but to rise.' Says the Swami :—

"It is very easy to talk. From my childhood, I have heard of seeing God everywhere and in everything and then I can really enjoy the world but as soon as I mix with the world, and get a few blows from it, the idea vanishes. I am walking in the street thinking that God is in every man; and a strong man comes along and gives me a push and I fall flat on the footpath. Then I rise up quickly with clenched fist. Everything is forgotten, and instead of encountering God, I see the devil. Ever since we were born, we have been told to see God in all, every religion teaches that—see God in everything and everywhere. It is when we come to the practical side that the difficulty begins.

"The ideal is far away no doubt, but we must have it, even the highest ideal! If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore it is better to have an ideal. Fill the mind with the highest ideals, hear them day after

day, think of them month after month. Never mind failures. They are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, these failures. What would life be without them? It would not be worth having if it were not for struggles. Where would be the poetry of life? Never mind the struggles, the mistakes. Hold the idea a thousand times; if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more. The ideal of man is to see God in everything. But if you cannot see Him in everything, see Him in one thing, in that thing which you like best, and then see Him in another. There is infinite life before the soul. Take your time and you will achieve your end." (Vol. II, pp. 151-53)

Thus the practical Vedantin is content to wait, content to struggle, content even to fail. He has known the ideal, he knows he is progressing towards the ideal. What does it matter if the speed be a slow one? The speed will depend upon his own fitness, upon the intensity of his efforts, upon the tenacity of his own will. What good is impatience if the will be weak, if the efforts be halting? But he is not discouraged. Even if the movement is slow, it is the movement towards the ideal and not from away the ideal. Even if the movement is slow, the progress is sure and certain and even if the whole ideal be not realized in one birth, he does not care. For he has learnt to think of the life of the soul and not of the body.

Such is the practical Vedantin. It may be asked: What is the good of trying to see God in everything? Admitting that God is in everything, how does it benefit him? What good does it do to him? Is he any the better for this kind of belief? Where does this kind of Sadhana lead him? What changes does it bring about in his life, in his behaviour, in his personality? What change does it bring about in the outlook of the man? In what way does this sadhana differ from others? The answer is that the gradual training of the mind about seeing God in everything will enable a man to see God in Himself, to understand his real nature; and that is what is principally required by the practical Vedantin. Says the Swami:—

“ You *have* everything, nay, you *are* everything. If a King goes mad and runs about trying to find out the King of the country, he will never find him because he is the King himself. It is better that we know God and give up this fool's search after Him; and knowing that we are God, we become happy and contented. Give up these mad pursuits and then play your part in the Universe, as an actor on the stage.

“ Whole vision is changed, and instead of an eternal prison this world has become a playground; instead of a land of competition, it is a land of bliss, where there is perpetual spring, flowers bloom and butterflies flit about. This very world becomes heaven which formerly was hell. To the eyes of the bound, it is a tremendous place of torment but to the eyes of the free, it is quite otherwise. This one life is the Universal Life, heavens and all those places are here. All the Gods are here, the prototypes of man. We have been projecting our little doubles and we are the originals of these Gods, we are the real, the only Gods to be worshipped. When we have become free, we need not go mad and throw up society and rush off to die in the forest or in the cave. We shall remain where we were, only we shall understand the whole thing. The same phenomena will remain but with a new meaning. Through delusion, we were trying to forget our nature, and yet we could not. It was always calling upon us and all our search after God and gods or external freedom was a search after our real freedom.

“ You remember perhaps the old Persian story of how a lover came and knocked at the door of the beloved and was asked ‘Who are you?’ He answered ‘It is I’ and there was no response. A second time he came and exclaimed ‘I am here’ but the door was not opened. The third time he came and the voice asked from inside ‘Who is there?’ He replied ‘I am thyself my beloved’ and the door opened. So is the relation between God and ourselves. He is in everything. He is everything. Every man and woman is the palpable blissful living God. Who says God is unknown? Who says he is to be searched after? We have found God eternally. We have been living in

him eternally. Everywhere he is eternally known, eternally worshiped." (Vol. II, pp. 323-24)

This is the consummation which is the goal of the practical Vedantin. The progress in the initial stages is slow and even tiresome, but once he gathers momentum by filling his mind with the ideal, by good deeds, by self-control, by purity, by love, then the march of the practical Vedantin is very rapid. Then he proceeds from one spiritual victory to another. Then religion no longer remains words to him, it has become converted into hard fact, into realization. Such practical Vedantins were to be found by the hundreds in ancient India when spirituality was at its highest. Even in modern times they are not altogether rare and Swami was determined that their number in India and abroad shall increase.

The Westerners are a hard-headed practical race. They must not only be convinced of the truth; they must be convinced that this mighty Truth can and must be carried into everyday practice. Mere Vedanta they would have rejected. Hence Swamiji wanted to teach them practical Vedanta. This he taught on the individual side as well as on the social side. The individual's practical Vedanta we have seen already. The practical Vedanta of the society means democracy, the destruction of all privileges, the breaking down of all special claims. Call it democracy, call it socialism, call it equality, Vedanta says this, the destruction of privilege is the goal of every society. Practical Vedanta as applied to societies means the destruction of privilege. Says the Swami:—

//"The idea of privilege is the bane of human life. Two forces are constantly at work, one making caste and the other breaking it, the one making privilege and the other breaking it. Whenever privilege is broken down, more and more light and progress come to a race. There is first the brutal idea of privilege. Then there is privilege of wealth; there is still the subtler and more powerful privilege of intellect. And last of all and worst because the most tyrannical is the privilege of spirituality. The work of Advaita is to break down all these privileges.

"Once a gigantic attempt was made to preach Vedantic ethics, I mean the Buddhistic attempt to break down caste and privilege. Some of the most beautiful epithets addressed to Buddha that I remember, are 'Thou the breaker of castes, the destroyer of privileges, preacher of equality to all beings.' So he preached this one idea of equality.

"This practical side of Vedanta is necessary as much to-day as it ever was; more necessary perhaps, than it ever was for all this privilege-claiming has become tremendously intensified with the extension of knowledge. Excess of knowledge and power without holiness makes human beings devils. Tremendous power is being acquired by the manufacture of machines and other appliances, and privilege is claimed to-day as it never was claimed before in the history of the world. That is why Vedanta wants to preach against it, to break down this tyrannising over the souls of men.

"This, then, the elimination of privilege is the work before the whole world. The difficulty is not that one body of men are naturally more intelligent than another but whether this body of men, because they have the advantage of intelligence, should take away even physical enjoyments from those who do not possess that advantage. The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege and practical Vedanta aims at its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity without destroying variety." (Vol. I, pp. 422-24 and 434)

Thus we see that Vedanta is the noblest of all religions because it is intensely practical. Practical Vedanta is the crying need of every individual, of every society. Individual progress and social progress demand that the practical side of the Vedanta be taught to all the nations of the world. The Swami did this work with his usual eloquence, penetration and directness.

On the individual side Practical Vedanta more and more means to see God in everything and this seeing of God in everything is to culminate in the knowledge that we are God. On the social side, Practical Vedanta means the

destruction of privilege and the establishment of equality. Both in individual sense as well as in social sense Practical Vedanta means more and more the perception and observance of unity all round.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS AND SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT

During the course of over one century, religions all over the world have to wage two distinct fights on two distinct battlefronts. The first fight may be called the internal fight; fight with those disruptive forces that seem to overwhelm religion and the second may be called external fight *i.e.*, fight with other religions and systems of religious or philosophical thought. On both these battlefronts the fights have been very severe during the course of the nineteenth century, especially in Europe, America and India.

The growth of materialism, the discoveries of science and third and not the least important, historical research, all these have considerably altered the religious thought and life of the nineteenth century. In respect of these three, while the Swami opposed materialism tooth and nail, he had nothing but admiration for the true scientific spirit and the spirit of historical research. Materialism, he regarded as an unmitigated curse and source of the glorification of the senses which are the greatest obstacles to the life spiritual. But as regards historical research and scientific discoveries, the Swami was an ardent devotee of both and was eager to restate our ancient religious thought with due deference to both. He was overjoyed to find that the Hindu Religion had nothing to fear from the onslaughts of both; as the Vedanta was independent of all personality he cared not even if the whole mythology went aboard. And as regards science, he repeatedly pointed out how the highest Vedantic conclusions bore the brunt of scientific onslaught and were tested and proved true by modern discoveries. He wanted due harmony and co-operation between science and religion: Says he:—

“And above all, this is needed between types of religious expression coming from the study of mental phenomena—unfortunately even now laying exclusive

claim to the name of religions—and those expressions of religion whose heads, as it were, are penetrating more into the secrets of heaven, though their feet are clinging to earth, I mean the so called materialistic sciences.

“To bring about this harmony, both will have to make concessions, sometimes very large, nay more, sometimes painful, but each will find itself the better for the sacrifice and more advanced in truth. And in the end, the knowledge which is confined within the domain of time and space,—will meet and become one with that which is beyond them both, where the mind and senses cannot reach—the Absolute, the Infinite, the One without a second. (Vol. II, pp. 68-69)

While this fight between the orthodox religious leaders and the leaders of modern science is doing untold harm to rigid and exclusive orthodoxy, throwing thousands of thoughtful men more and more into the category of agnostics, if not atheists, the warfare between the believing and fanatical elements of different religions has its own sad tale to tell. The Swami rightly says:—

“We find each religious sect has claimed the exclusive right to live. And thus we find that though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men and even for animals than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.” (Vol. II, p. 358)

So then, it is the exclusive and fanatical feeling in each religion and the different subsects of each religion that is responsible for all the blood, hatred and fury of so many centuries. That feeling which under proper and healthy influences is intended to concentrate more and more the attention of a man to the path of spiritual progress selected by and for him is also responsible for

much of the evil in this world also. The Swami was dead against the exclusive spirit of the religious fanatic which he held was due to ignorance and an improper and imperfect realisation of the truth. Says the Swami :—

“There are some religions which have come down to us from the remotest antiquity, which are imbued with the idea that all sects should be allowed to live ; that every sect has a meaning, a great idea imbedded within itself and therefore it is necessary for the good of the world and ought to be helped. In modern times the same idea is prevailing and attempts are made from time to time to reduce it to practice. These attempts do not always come up to our expectations, up to the required efficiency. Nay, to our disappointment, we sometimes find that we are quarrelling all the more.” (Vol. II, p. 358)

The Swami held that the very fact that so many sects are springing up, living, thriving, getting adherents, proves, as nothing else can prove, that there must be a great necessity for them, that they must be supplying a long felt want, that they are fulfilling some important purpose in God's economy of the universe. The Swami was a great believer in the famous law of unity in diversity and he frankly owned that there was no harm in having different sects, different religions, each with its individual theories, dogmas, ceremonials, worships, philosophies and ideals, provided that they agreed to live with fellow feeling and mutual good will, both the result of the recognition that all of them were necessary. Says he :—

“Had it been the will of an All-wise and All-merciful creator that one of these religions should exist and the rest should die, it would have become a fact long ago. If it were a fact that only one of these religions is true and all the rest false, by this time it would have covered the whole ground. If the claim of a religion, that it has all the truth and God has given it all this truth in a certain book were true, why are there so many sects? Fifty years do not pass before there are twenty sects founded upon the same book. I bring these facts before you in order to show you that any attempt to bring all humanity

to one method of thinking in spiritual things has been a failure and will always be a failure. You cannot make all conform to the same ideas. That is a fact and I thank God that it is so. I am glad that sects exist. If you and I and all who are present here, were to think exactly the same thoughts, there would be no thoughts for us to think. We know that two or more forces must come into collusion, in order to produce motion. It is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thought, that awakes thought. Whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water. When religions are dead, there will be no more sects. It will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. But so long as mankind thinks there will be sects, I pray that they may multiply so that at last there will be as many sects as human beings, and each one will have his own method, his individual method of thought in religion." (Vol. II, pp. 360-62)

There are two attitudes with respect to such numerous creeds and religions. One set of people say that we should tolerate them on higher or rather practical grounds of prudence, peace and goodwill. No doubt a particular religion or its sect is true and all the rest under the sun going under the name of religion is false but we should be kind and considerate and regarding the consequences of an exclusive spirit, tolerate those who differ from us regarding their ideas of God. This is an attitude of benevolent superiority. The Swami strongly differed from this view. He did not believe in tolerance, he firmly believed that all religions were true and that each one of them was necessary.

It might be asked how is it possible that all the religions should be true when we note their contradiction? To this the Swami replied that they really were not contradictions but emphasis on a particular aspect of the Truth. Truth has many sides and these sides are variously represented by the different religions. Says he :—

"Then arises the question, how can all these varieties be true? If one thing is true, its negation is false. How can contradictory opinions be true at the same time?

I will first ask you 'are all the religions of the world really contradictory'? I do not mean the external forms in which great thoughts are clad. But I mean the internal soul of every religion. Each religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion; but are they contradictory? Do they contradict or supplement each other?—that is the question. I took up the question when quite a boy, and have been studying it all my life. I believe that they are not contradictory; they are supplementary. If religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth, system after system arises, each one embodying a great ideal and ideals must be added to ideals. And this is the march of humanity. Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth.

"We know that there may be almost contradictory points of view of the same thing but they will all indicate the same thing. Take four photographs of this church from different corners! How different they would look and yet they would all represent this church. In the same way, we are all looking at truth from different stand-points which vary according to our birth, education, surroundings and so on. We are viewing truth, getting as much of it as these circumstances will permit, colouring the truth with our own heart, understanding it with our own intellect and grasping it with our own mind. We can only know as much of truth as is related to us, as much of it as we are able to receive. This makes the difference between man and man and occasions sometimes even contradictory ideas. Yet we all belong to the same great universal truth." (Vol. II, pp. 363-64)

Holding these views, it was quite natural that the Swami should repudiate Dr. Barrows' claims or efforts for universal religion. Dr. Barrows of course held that Christianity should be that universal religion. But Swami-ji would never agree even to Hinduism being put on the pedestal of universal religion. It was not his ideal to bring round a man to his way of thinking but to take him where

he was and from thence give him, if possible, a lift up. Being the chosen disciple of a Master who in his life had practised the truth of all religions, it was inevitable that the Swami should show equal veneration, and enthusiasm for all religions. Said he :—

“ I accept all religions that were in the past and worship them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the Mosque of the Mahomedans. I shall enter the Christian's Church and kneel before the Crucifix. I shall enter the Buddhistic temple and shall take refuge in Buddha and his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.

“ I shall also keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished ? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on ? The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would have it open for all of them. We stand in the present but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present and to all that are to come in the future.” ( Vol. II, p. 372 )

Swamiji must have discovered this position of universal admiration and reverence for all religions, one of immense advantage to him in his preachings in the West ; because it at once engratiated him into the hearts of his hearers. A man who could begin by admiring the character of the founder of a particular religion and continue by admiring several of its tenets is sure to command sympathy and audiences.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century arose a school of thought which while it conceded that all religions were true, yet wanted to make one religion out of all these warring faiths. The object of these persons was very laudable. They wanted to get at the universal Truth without the disadvantages of all these fights and

bloodsheds in the name of religion. They hoped that if sincere efforts were made to comprehensively study all religions and extract the best part of them all, separate it from the nonessential or untrue or mischievous and then if all these essences of all the religions were combined, an universal religion could be produced which, by reducing and eliminating fights and factions, bring very much nearer the advent of the long-expected millennium.

The Swami sympathised with the desire of these people but was of firm conviction that it was impossible of achievement. His experience of three continents gave a direct and negative answer to all the hopes that these well-meaning enthusiasts entertained about the approach of the golden age. With his merciless capacity for analysis the Swami examined the arguments of these people and proved to their satisfaction that their claims were unreasonable. Their efforts, if successful, would either make the universal religion only a nominal thing or else the substance of each religion would be as distasteful to the adherents of the universal Religion as mere nitrogenous food would be to an average man. Therefore the Swami resolutely opposed all talk of a universal religion which he regarded as a sham. Said he :—

“We see that in every religion there are three parts,—I mean in every great and recognized religion. First there is the philosophy, which presents the whole scope of that religion, setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. It consists of legends relating to the lives of men, or of supernatural beings and so forth. It is the abstractions of philosophy concretized in the more or less imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. The third part is the ritual. This is still more concrete and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and incense and many other things that appeal to the senses. You will find that all recognized religions have these three elements. Let us now take into consideration the first part, philosophy. Is there any universal philosophy? Not yet. Each

religion brings out its own doctrines, and insists upon them as the only true ones.

"Is there any mythological similarity, is there any mythological harmony, any universal mythology accepted by all religions? Certainly not. All religions have their own mythologies, only each of them says 'my stories are not mere myths.' Next come the rituals. One sect has one particular form of rituals and thinks that it is holy while the rituals of another sect are simply arrant superstition. So even in rituals, there is no universal symbol which can command general recognition and acceptance. Where then is any universality? How is it possible then to have a universal form of religion?"

In another sense, however, Swamiji was quite willing to claim Vedanta as the universal religion. As has been said above he refused to allow one ritual, one mythology, one philosophy to dominate infinite varieties of culture, thought, equipment and ideals. At the same time he knew that our Vedic religion alone is broad-bottomed enough to attract different types of religious men; and that is why he, in this particularly limited sense, claimed for the Vedic religion the honour of being the universal religion. Says he:—

"What do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean any universal philosophy or any universal mythology or any universal ritual held alike by all; for I know that this world must go on, wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery most complex, most wonderful. What can we do then? We can make it run smoothly. How? By recognizing the natural necessity of variation.

"Now a religion to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind must be able to supply food for all the various types of minds. In society there are thousands and thousands of varieties of mind and inclination. For our practical purpose, it is sufficient to have them characterized into four classes. First, there is the active man, the worker; then there is the emotional man, who loves the sublime and the beautiful in an excessive degree. He wants to adore Love and the God of Love. Then there is the mystic whose mind wants to analyse its own self. Then there is the philosopher who wants to weigh everything



and use his intellect even beyond the possibilities of all human philosophy. What I want to propagate is a religion which will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. This will be the nearest approach to a universal religion." (Vol. II, pp. 383-5)

Equally interesting are Swamiji's references to other religions. The general attitude he had taken naturally enjoined upon him to preach Vedanta and its background of Indian history and civilisation in the west and in the mother country. But it was inevitable that he should now and then make references to other faiths, their apostles and prophets, their tenets, their ideals and so on. As most of Swamiji's lectures were delivered before either Christian or Hindu audiences, he referred mostly to Christianity, Vedanta and Buddhism. Now and then he spoke about Zoroastrianism and Mahomedanism. But the references to these two faiths were naturally few. However, let us see what he spoke about all these alien religions.

References to Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsis are in the Swami's lectures and discourses very rare and meagre. Not being a very well-known religion—being the religion of a microscopic minority in India and Persia—it could not be used for the purpose of illustration; nor were the members of the audiences Parsis. Still to Swamiji, who had studied it carefully, it made a special appeal and we find that whenever Swamiji makes a passing mention of it, he never fails to put some honorific adjective to it. 'The grand Zoroastrianism' or 'the noble religion of the Parsis'—in this way he refers to it on occasions of casual allusions.

What struck him most with regard to Zoroastrianism was its great and hoary antiquity. The point that next attracted him was its limited and dwindling number. In his paper on Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament of Religions he refers to Zoroastrianism along with Hinduism and Judaism thus :—

"Three religions now stand in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric—Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. They have all received tremen-

dous shocks and all of them prove by their survival their internal strength. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and a handful of Parsis is all that remains to tell the tale of their grand religion. Sect after sect arose in India and seemed to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very foundations but like the waters of the seashore it receded only for a while. etc." (Vol. I, p. 4)

Here, of course, the reference to Zoroastrianism is quite a passing one. What struck Swamiji most with respect to this hoary religion is its dwindling, non-proselytizing nature. Says he :—

"Only one religion of the world—an ancient, great religion—has dwindled away, and that is the religion of Zoroastrianism, the religion of the ancient Persians. Under the Mahomedan conquest of Persia, about a hundred thousand of these people came and took shelter in India and some remained in ancient Persia. Those that were in Persia, under the constant persecution of the Mahomedans dwindled down, till there were at most only ten thousand ; in India there are about eight thousand of them but they do not increase. Of course there is an initial difficulty : They do not convert others to their religion. And then this handful of persons living in India, with the pernicious custom of cousin marriage, do not multiply. With this single exception all the great religions are living, spreading and increasing." (Vol. II, p. 359)

Now we come to Mahomedanism. Here the references are ampler ; for though there were hardly any Mahomedans in the large audiences in Europe, America and India that hung upon his words, still to most of them Mahomedanism was familiar enough through its sons and daughters and hence it could be used for the purpose of illustrating or embellishing Swamiji's points.

With his great love for all, Swamiji naturally loved the Mahomedans and their militant faith. He was the first apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity and his ideal of manhood was expressed in the words 'an Islamic body and a Vedantin heart'. In the west, he frequently referred to Mahomedans as '*our*' Mahomedans and Akbar for him •

was an ideal Mahomedan whose spirit ought to grow and prevail in these days of national awakening. He constantly referred to the fact that most of the Mahomedans now in India were indigenous Mahomedans and not foreigners and he noted with great envy the pride which most of them felt for their religion. In Cashmere, he once asked a Hindu what his religion was, and the man casually said that he was a Hindu. But when he turned to a Mahomedan lady with a similar question, he got the reply 'Praise be to Allah, I am a Mahomedan.' In these two characteristic replies Swamiji discovered a world of meaning; and he wanted the Hindus to be nationally as proud of their religion as the Mahomedans were of theirs.

The first point that strikes all with reference to Mahomedanism is their intense fanaticism; and no doubt this point struck the Swami also. Says he :—

"The Mahommedans are the crudest in this respect, and the most sectarian. Their watchword is 'There is one God and Mahomed is His Prophet.' Everything beyond that not only is bad but must be destroyed forthwith; at a moment's notice every man or woman who does not exactly believe in that must be killed; everything that does not belong to this worship must be immediately broken; every book that teaches anything else must be burnt. From the Pacific to the Atlantic for five hundred years blood ran all over the world! That is Mohamedanism!" (Vol. IV, p. 122)

But the Swami was a man accustomed by nature and training to look beneath the surface of things and he could not but fail to notice in what the strength of the Mahomedans lay. Long before the modern Democracy prevailed, and was even heard of, the Mahomedans practised it on a universal basis and this is why that faith has outlived many shocks. Says the Swami :—

"Christian people hate no religion in the world so much as Mahommedanism. They think that to be the worst form of religion that ever existed. But it is splendid to study the mission of Mahomedanism. As soon as a man becomes a Mahommedan, the whole of Islam receives him as a brother with open arms, without making any distinc-

tion, which no other religion does. If one of your Americans becomes a Mahomedan, the Sultan of Turkey would have no objection to dine with him. If he has brains, no position is barred to him. In this country, I have never seen a church where the white man and the negro can kneel side by side and pray. Just think of that. Islam makes its followers all equal; so, that you see is the excellence of Mahomedanism. In many places in the Koran, you find very sensual ideas of life. Never mind. What Mahomedanism comes to preach to the world is this practical brotherhood of all belonging to their faith. That is the essential part of the Mohammedan religion; and all other ideas about heaven and of life are mere accretions." (Vol. II, pp. 369-70)

"Mohammed by his life showed that among the Mahommedans there should be perfect equality and brotherhood. There was no question of race, caste, creed, colour or sex. The Sultan of Turkey may buy a Negro from the mart of Africa, and bring him in chains to Turkey; but should he become a Mahommedan and have sufficient merit and abilities, he might marry even the daughter of the Sultan. Compare this with the way in which the Negroes and the American Indians are treated in this country. And what do Hindus do? If one of your missionaries chance to touch the food of an orthodox person he would throw it away. Notwithstanding our grand philosophy, you note our weakness in practice. But there you see the greatness of the Mahommedans beyond other races, showing itself in equality, perfect equality, regardless of race or colour." (Vol. IV, pp. 129-30)

It will thus be seen that while condemning the fanaticism of the Mahommedans, the Swami failed not to pay unstinted homage to the perfect spirit of democracy which prevails and prevailed under them. The Swami was a most observant and synthetic thinker and he has found out the real analysis of the Mahommedan character. Many of his passing remarks regarding the Mahommedans are also very interesting and instructive. See how original is Swamiji's interpretation of the fanaticism which Mahomed, the prophet of Islam was the first victim of. Says he :

“The yogi says that there is a great danger in stumbling upon this superconscious state. In a good many cases, there is the danger of the brain being deranged, and as a rule, you will find that all those men however great they were, who had stumbled upon this superconscious state, without understanding it, groped in the dark and generally had along with that knowledge some quaint superstition. They opened themselves to hallucinations. Mohamed claimed that the angel Gabriel came to him in a cave one day and took him on the heavenly horse Harak and he visited the heavens. But with all that Mohammed spoke some wonderful truths. If you read the Koran, you will read the most wonderful truths mixed with superstitions. How will you explain it? That man was inspired no doubt, but that inspiration was, as it were, stumbled upon. He was not a trained yogi and did not know the reason of what he was doing. Think of the good Mahommed did to the world and think of the great evil that has been done through his fanaticism. Think of the millions massacred through his teachings, mothers bereft of their children, children made orphans, whole countries destroyed, millions upon millions of persons killed.” (Vol. I, p. 184)

It will thus be seen that the light which the Swami throws upon any subject is generally altogether new and even his casual and passing remarks have in them something thought provoking. From the standpoint of the Vedic faith, the Swami noted the lurking danger in the fanatical proselytising tendencies of the Moslems. It is true that he sometimes qualified his statement by saying that unless the Mahomedans had some good in them, they could not have been able to convert one fifth of the total population to their Faith. Says he:—

“The days of exclusive privileges and exclusive claims are gone, gone for ever from the soil of India and it is one of the great blessings of the British Rule of India. Even to the Mahomedan rule, we owe that great blessing, the destruction of exclusive privilege. That rule was after all not bad; nothing is all bad, nothing is all good. The Mahommedan conquest of India came as a salvation

to the down-trodden, to the poor; that is why one fifth of the population have become Mahomedans. It was not the sword that did it all. It would be the height of madness to think that it was all the work of sword and fire." (Vol. III, p. 294)

But from the Swami's point of view, the Mahomedan rule failed to infuse vitality into the drooping veins of India and bring her back once more the glory of Vedic and Buddhistic times. No doubt it gave the poor the chance to grow; no doubt, its levelling tendency gave some respite to the lower classes. No doubt its ideal of equality was admirable and healthily though imperceptibly reacted upon the crystallized social fabric of India. But from this larger point of view, Islam failed to be the saviour of India. Says the Swami:—

"At the same time, when the national vigour went, perhaps one or two centuries before the Mahomedan conquest of India, this national faculty became so much exaggerated that it degraded itself and we find some of this degradation in everything in India, in art, in music, in science, in everything. In art, no more was there a broad conception but the tremendous attempt at the ornate and florid style had arisen. In music no more were there the soul stirring ideas of the ancient sanskrit music. The whole of modern music is a jumble of notes, a confused mass of curves. And even in religion, your special field, there came the most horrible degradations. The Mahomedan conquest gave us many good things no doubt; but it could not bring vigour into the race." (Vol. III, pp. 270-71)

The Swami was immensely proud of the fact that India had on the whole creditably stood the shock of Mahomedan conquest. Says he:—

"Wave after wave had flooded the land, breaking and crushing everything for hundreds of years. The sword had flashed, and "Victory unto Allah" had rent the skies but the floods subsided, leaving the national ideals unchanged." (Vol. IV, p. 155)

From the strictly Hindu point of view, the Swami was aware of the importance of numbers and he exhorted

all to shoulder the burden of making Hinduism strong and virile. Says he :—

“There is no power in the universe to injure us unless we first injure ourselves. One fifth of the population of India have been Mahomedans. Just as before that going further back, two thirds of the population in ancient times had become Buddhists, one fifth are now Mahomedans. Whose fault is it? One of our historians says in ever memorable language—why should these poor wretches starve and die of thirst when the perennial fountain of life is flowing by? The question is what did we do for these people who forsook their religion? Why should they have become Mahomedans? We are weeping for the renegades now but what did we do for them before? We did not help them then. Materialism or Mahomedanism or Christianity could never have succeeded but that you allowed them. If we were all brave and had stout hearts and with absolute sincerity put our shoulders to the wheel, in twentyfive years the whole of the problem would be solved, and there would be nothing left here to fight about but the whole Indian world would become once more Aryan.” (Vol. III, pp. 167-68)

Ever since boyhood, Swamiji had a deep and abiding veneration for the personality of Lord Buddha. Once asked in America if he was a follower of Buddha, he replied ‘I am a servant of the servant of Buddha!’ This deep veneration may be due to his conviction that as a child he had a Visit from Lord Buddha. Let the Swami speak :—

“While at school, one night I was meditating within closed doors and had a fairly deep concentration of mind. The meditation over, from the southern wall of the room a luminous figure stepped out and stood in my front. It was the figure of a sanyasin absolutely calm, shaven headed and staff and Kamandalu in hand. He gazed at me for some time and seemed as if he would address me. A kind of terror seized me, I opened the door and hurried out of the room. I think it was the Lord Buddha whom I saw.” (Vol. VII, p. 121)

It was therefore quite natural that he should express his veneration for Buddha in language which to others

might appear hyperbolic but it expressed but imperfectly what Swamiji felt and thought. Says the Swami :—

“All the prophets of the world except Buddha had external motives to move them to unselfish action. He said ‘I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is.’ He was in the conduct of his life absolutely without personal motives. And what man worked more than he? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character, such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals and never put forth any claims for himself.” (Vol. I, p. 115)

The greatest service Buddha rendered to mankind was to rouse its moral energy with a sweep and a power never before witnessed in the history of the world. But all this miracle he achieved with perfect nonviolence. Says the Swami :—

“The three missionary religions are the Buddhist, Mahommedanism and Christianity. The three older ones, Hinduism, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism never sought to make converts, Buddhists never killed but converted three quarters of the world at one time by pure gentleness.” (Vol. VII, p. 41)

This is indeed very high praise but a praise fully deserved. How often in the history of the world have moral and mystic truths been forced, like unpalatable medicines, into the throats of those who did not want them, did not care for them? How many rivers of blood have flown just because one god should be respected more than another god? But Buddha stood above all this wickedness in the name of religion. It was because of the moral fervour of Buddha and his disciples that this miracle was achieved. But there was another reason and the Swami thought, a more important reason that helped the phenomenal rise of Buddhism. Says he :—



“ You read in books written by men who had never studied the rise and fall of Buddhism that the spread of Buddhism was owing to the wonderful ethics and wonderful personality of Buddha. I have every respect and veneration for Lord Buddha, but mark my words, the spread of Buddhism was less owing to the doctrines and the personality of the great preacher than to the temples that were built, the idols that were erected and the gorgeous ceremonies that were put before the nation. The little fire places in the houses before which people poured their libations were not strong enough to hold their own against these gorgeous temples and ceremonies, but later on the whole thing degenerated.” (Vol. III, pp. 216-17) Again,

“ You all know about his great work and his grand character. But the work had one great defect and for that we are suffering even to-day. No blame attaches to the Lord. Unfortunately such high ideals could not be well assimilated by the different uncivilised and uncultured races of mankind who flocked within the fold of the Aryans. These races, with varieties of superstitions and hideous worship, rushed within the fold of the Aryans and for a time appeared as if they had become civilised but before a century had passed, they brought out their snakes, their ghosts, and all other things their ancestors used to worship, and thus the whole of India became one degraded mass of superstition. The earlier Buddhists in their rage against the killing of animals, had denounced the sacrifices of the Vedas ; and these sacrifices used to be held in every house. There was a fire burning and that was all the paraphernalia of worship. These sacrifices were obliterated and in their place came gorgeous temples, gorgeous ceremonies, gorgeous priests and all that you see in India in modern times. I smile when I read in books that the Buddha was the destroyer of Brahmanical idolatry. Little do they know that Buddhism created Brahmanism and idolatry in India.” (Vol. III, pp. 263-64)

It will thus be seen that Swamiji's views about the work of Buddha and Buddhism are supported by strong historical evidence. During his long travels Swamiji had studied the history of religions, philosophies, castes, cultures

and civilisations and had minutely observed all the variations of the national life. It was therefore inevitable that he should discover flaws in the armoury of later Buddhists and proclaim it out of regard for truth and the present need of the time. But this did not detract from the veneration in which he held the Lord. Criticism was to him one thing and veneration quite another and he could do both with respect to men and women he honoured most. It is refreshing to find that all these views have been endorsed by subsequent writers.

Another great flaw in the work of militant Buddhism was the neglect of secular education. Religious work and propaganda are all right in their own way but they give the start and real and permanent work can only be achieved by secular education. Says the Swami :—

“ You must go out to preach your religion, preach it to every nation under the sun, preach it to every people. And after preaching spiritual knowledge, along with it will come that secular knowledge and every other knowledge that you want. But if you attempt to get secular knowledge without religion I tell you plainly vain is your attempt in India. It will never have a hold on the people. The great Buddhistic movement was a failure, partially on account of that.” (Vol. III, p. 223)

Another mistake of Buddha and his followers was the discouragement of Sanskrit. Sanskrit and prestige go together. But in their craze for vernaculars, they neglected the language of Gods and hence their triumph was shortlived. Says the Swami :—

“ Even the great Buddha made one false step when he stopped the Sanskrit language from being studied by the masses. He wanted rapid and immediate results, and translated and preached in the language of the day, Pali. That was grand, he spoke in the language of the people and the people understood him. It spread the ideas quickly and made them reach far and wide but along with that Sanskrit ought to have spread. Knowledge came but the prestige was not there, the culture was not there. It is culture which withstands shocks not a simple mass of knowledge. Teach the masses in the vernaculars,

give them ideas, but something more is necessary. Give them culture. I tell you, men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit, the only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education, which is the strength of the higher castes. This Buddhism failed to do." (Vol. III, p. 291)

Still another flaw, Swamiji discovered in the preachings of Buddha. Though he preached to the masses, he uttered words only of unadulterated renunciation. Just as to suit the mass mind he neglected the Sanskrit and used Pali, similarly to suit mass mentality, he ought to have toned down the high ideal of renunciation. His method might have roused temporary enthusiasm no doubt but in the end it was a hopeless mass of ruin. Says the Swami :—

"The Vedas were the first to find and proclaim the way to Moksha, and from that one source was taken whatever Buddha afterwards taught. The aims of the Buddhistic and Vedic religions are the same but the means adopted by the Buddhistic are not right. The Buddhas declared 'Nothing is more desirable in life than Moksha; whoever you are, come one and all to take it'; I ask 'Is that ever possible?' He who cannot leap over one foot, is going to jump across the ocean to Lanka in one bound!" If the Buddhistic means were correct, then why have we been thus hopelessly lost and ruined? Therefore though the aims are the same, the Buddhas for want of right means have degraded India." (Vol. V, p. 357-58)

Swamiji held that Buddha brought no new philosophy but derived it mainly from the Upanishads. One may go a little further and say that in the beginning this disregard of Buddha for philosophy and metaphysics was the main reason why he succeeded. It is action which appeals to the masses and not mere thought however grand. And this action roused by Buddha and his followers carried everything before it. At last however came the need of systematising the truths preached by Buddha and for this philosophy was needful. This

philosophy was in the main the philosophy of the Upanishads, adapted to suit the exigencies of the propaganda work done by militant Buddhism. Let us briefly see Swamiji's analysis and statement of the Buddhistic philosophy:—

“The Buddhists were the most logical agnostics. You can really stop nowhere between nihilism and absolutism. The Buddhists were intellectually all-destroyers, carrying their theory to its ultimate logical issue. The Advaitists also worked out their theory to its logical conclusion and reached the Absolute, one identified unit substance, out of which all phenomena are being manifested. Both Buddhists and Advaitists have a feeling of identity and non-identity at the same time. One of these feelings must be false and the other true. The nihilist puts the reality in non-identity, the realist puts the reality in identity; and this is the fight which occupies the whole world. This is the ‘tug of the war’.

“The realist asks ‘How does the nihilist get any idea of identity?’ How does the revolving light appear a circle? A point of rest alone explains motion. The nihilist can never explain the genesis of the delusion that there is a background. Neither can the idealist explain how the one becomes the many. The only explanation must come from beyond the sense plane—we must rise to the superconscious, to a state entirely beyond sense perception. That metaphysical power is the further instrument that the idealist alone can use. He can experience the Absolute. For him the problem has been solved and secondarily for others. Thus religion begins where philosophy ends.” (Vol. VII, pp. 41-42)

From the above close and critical analysis, it will be seen that the Swami's analysis and knowledge of philosophical Buddhism was anything but superficial and was based on a thorough and sound study of Buddhistic philosophy. In fact, it may be said that in his mind, the arguments of philosophical Buddhism and philosophical Advaitism perpetually waged war against each other and he was always arguing, weighing, discussing all questions from the vantage ground of these arguments.

We conclude our survey of Buddhism and its work with the following tribute which the Swami paid to it:—

“Buddhism, one of the most philosophical religions in the world spread all through the populace, the common people of India. What a wonderful culture there must have been among the Aryans, twenty-five hundred years ago to be able to grasp such ideas.

“Shankara sometimes resorts to sophistry in order to prove that the ideas in the book go to uphold his philosophy. Buddha was more brave and sincere than any teacher. He said ‘Believe no book. The Vedas are all humbug. If they agree with me, so much the better for the books. I am the greatest book. Sacrifice and prayer are useless.’

—“Buddha was a great Vedantist. Buddhism was really only an offshoot of the Vedanta; and Shankara is often called a ‘hidden Buddhist.’ Buddha made the analysis, Shankara made the synthesis out of it. Buddha never bowed down to anything, neither Veda, nor caste, nor priest, nor custom. He fearlessly reasoned so far as reason could take him. Such a fearless search for truth and such love for every living thing the world has never seen. Buddha was the Washington of the religious world. He conquered a throne only to give it to the world, as Washington did to the American people. He sought nothing for himself.

“As a character, Buddha was the greatest the world has ever seen. Next to him is Christ. But the teachings of Krishna as taught in the Gita are the grandest the world has ever known. He who wrote that wonderful poem was one of those rare souls whose lives send a wave of regeneration through the world. The human race will never again see such a brain as his who wrote the Gita.” (Vol. VII, pp. 20, 37, 38, 57)

Swamiji's veneration for the Christ was next only to his veneration for Buddha. To an American friend he once said ‘Had I been living in the days of Christ, I would have washed his feet not with tears but with my heart's blood.’ To an American audience he said ‘We want the missionaries of Christ. Let such come to India

by hundreds and thousands. Bring Christ's life to us and let it permeate the very core of society. Let Him be preached in every village and corner of India." With such a deep veneration of Christ, it was natural that he should command respect and veneration wherever he went through Europe and America and it can be said without fear of contradiction that his message was heard with greater readiness because of this attachment to Christ.

It filled the heart of Swami with pride to say that Jesus Christ was not an occidental, for, he used to say, whence else could religion come if not from the Orient ! Says he :—

"All the different religions which grew among different nations under varying circumstances and conditions had their origin in Asia, and the Asiatics understand them well. When they came out from their motherland they got mixed up with errors. The most profound and noble ideas of Christianity were never understood in Europe because the ideas and images used by the writers in the Bible were foreign to them. Take for illustration the pictures of the Madonna. Every artist paints his Madonna according to his own preconceived ideas. I have been seeing hundreds of pictures of the last supper of Jesus Christ and he is made to sit at a table. Now Christ never sat at a table. He squatted with others and they had a bowl in which they dipped bread—not the kind of bread you eat to-day. It is hard for any nation to understand the unfamiliar customs of other people. How much more difficult was it for Europeans to understand the Jewish customs after centuries of changes and accretions from Greek, Roman and other sources. Through all the myths and mythologies by which it is surrounded, it is no wonder that the people get very little of the beautiful religion of Jesus Christ." (Vol. I, pp. 319-20) Again:—

"With all your attempt to paint Jesus with blue eyes and yellow hair the Nazarene was still an oriental. All the similies, the imageries, in which the Bible is written,—the scenes, the locations, the attitudes, the groups, the poetry and symbol—speak to you of the orient." (Vol. IV, p. 138)

The Swami says that in spirituality Jesus was intensely practical. Says the Swami:—

“In the life of this great messenger of Light, the first watchword is ‘Not this life but something higher’ and like a true son of the orient he is practical in that. He has no faith in this evanescent world and all its belongings. Let us be all honest. If we cannot follow the ideal, let us confess our weakness, but not degrade it. The best commentary on the life of great teacher is his own life. ‘The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nest but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.’ This is what Christ says is the only way to salvation; he lays down no other. Let us confess in sack cloth and ashes that we cannot do that. We want property, money, wealth !

“He had no other occupation in life; no other thought except one that he was a spirit. He was a disembodied, unfettered, unbound spirit. And not only so, but he with his marvellous vision had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Gentile, saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying spirit as himself. Therefore the one wish his life showed, was calling upon them to realize their own spiritual nature. ‘Ye are all sons of God !’ ‘I and my father are one !’ That was the spirit of Jesus Christ. He never talks of this world and of this life. He has nothing to do with it, except that he wants to get hold of the world as it is, give it a push and drive it forward and forward, until the whole world has reached the effulgent Light of God ! Until everyone has realized his spiritual nature, until death is vanquished and misery banished.” ( Vol. IV, pp. 141-42 )

Christianity has been claimed to be a religion of Dualism and in a certain sense it is so. But to the luminous vision of the Swami, Christianity is not only a hard and fast dualistic religion but comprises within itself all the three stages of the evolution of man in his godward journey. The Dyaita, the Vishishtadvaita and the Advaita are to be found in Christianity also, only the student of Christianity must bring to bear on his study a mind untrammelled by tradition, authority and superstition. Swamiji

belonged to this type of men and hence he has been able to make this discovery. Says he:—

“In three ways, man sees God. At first the undeveloped intellect of the uneducated man sees God as far away, up in the heavens somewhere, sitting on a throne, as a great Judge. The religions of the unthinking masses all over the world must be, and have always been, of a God who is outside of the universe; who lives in heaven who governs from that place, who is the punisher of the bad and a rewarder of the good and so on. As man advanced spiritually, he began to feel that that God was omnipresent, that He must be in him, that He must be everywhere, that He was not a distant God but closely the Soul of all souls. And the few individuals who had developed enough and were pure enough went still further and at last found God.

“You find that all these three stages are taught by the great Teacher in the New Testament. Note the common prayer he taught ‘Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name’. It is intended for the uneducated masses. To a higher circle who had advanced a little more he gave a more elevated teaching ‘I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you’. And then, when the Jews asked him who he was, he declared that he and his Father were one.”

Having thus considered Swamiji's views with respect to all the principal religions of the world and religious systems of thought, we proceed, before concluding this brief survey, to touch for a while his views on Theosophy. Theosophy came into prominence a few years before the Swami commenced his career and it was precisely those very classes which were open to the Swami in the west, that were open to appeals of theosophists also. Naturally therefore the Theosophists felt a kind of jealousy for the Swami because they felt that he was likely to thwart their work. Even before Swamiji went to America, the Theosophists felt a kind of instinctive dread of him. Let the Swami speak:—

“Four years ago, when I, a poor, friendless, unknown, sanyasin was going to America, I called on the leader



of the Theosophical society ; naturally I thought that he being an American and a lover of India, would give me a letter of introduction to somebody there. He asked me 'will you join my society ?' 'No', I replied 'how can I ? For I do not believe in most of your doctrines.' 'Then, I am sorry to say I cannot do anything for you ;' he answered. I reached America, as you know, through the help of a few friends of Madras. I arrived in America several months before the Parliament of Religions began. The money I had with me was little and it was soon spent. There I was with the last few dollars in my pocket. I sent a wire to my friends in Madras. This came to be known to the Theosophists and one of them wrote 'Now the devil is going to die ; God bless us all.' That was not all. I saw some Theosophists at the Parliament of Religions and wanted to talk and mix with them. I remember their look of scorn, as if say 'what business has the worm to be here in the midst of the Gods.' (Vol. III, pp. 208-09)

Apart from the fact that a few foreigners howsoever learned had no right to teach India the science of religion which had been developed here for centuries together and of which living exponents can be had still, Swami objected to the Theosophists because they appeared to give the people back their superstitions. Says he :—

"On the other hand there is the man educated but who is a sort of monomaniac who wants to explain this and that. He has philosophical and metaphysical and God knows what other puerile explanations for every superstition. I would rather see every one of you an atheist than a superstitious fool. If superstition enters the brain, it is gone, it is softening, degradation has seized upon life. Avoid all mystery. There is no mystery in religion. What secret societies did the sages establish to preach their religion ?"

It will thus be seen that the attitude of the Swami with respect to Theosophy was a very sturdy one. All the same, he appreciated the little good work Theosophy was doing in India. The Swami's all-embracing intellect made a penetrating search over all religions and his

thoughts on them all are characterized at once by admiration, originality and breadth of outlook. His unique vision enabled him to grasp the essence of truth within a twinkle of the eye. And this all-comprehensive truth the Swami observed, stored and used on proper occasions. But though he thus delighted to roam on all the regions of the earth, it was to Vedanta, the queen of his heart that he owed allegiance and his comparative study of all religions only tended to deepen his love of and allegiance for the mother of all Religions—Vedanta.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIAL REFORM

In the early youth of the Swami, 'Social Reform' occupied the attention of the public almost to the exclusion of anything else. The words 'Social Reform' have a peculiar significance in India. The reform of society is always a desirable thing and should invariably command the sympathy and support of every son and daughter of the country. That the malpractices, corruptions and other evils in the society should be eradicated and the healthy breeze of knowledge and liberty should bring greater happiness to the people is an ideal which will find response in the heart of any person. We dare say that civilised nations that they are, England, France, U. S. America, Germany have in their society various features that the right thinking citizens condemn and would be immensely benefited if those evils are eradicated. But we have not yet heard of any National Conferences held in these countries to concert measures to counteract these evils. The reason is that these countries have a sense of proportion which was sorely wanting in the leaders of Indian thought in the seventies and eighties of the last century. The reason is that these countries have far more attractive problems to consider and decide upon and would consider it a waste of time to handle their Social Reform problems on a national scale. But the condition of India some sixty or seventy years before was entirely different. The then leaders of our society were trained in a way and brought up in an atmosphere which impressed upon their mind the social disabilities and evils of our race to an abnormal and almost fanatical extent.

The first batches of English educated Indians were, like their peers of to-day, patriots of the first water. There is no doubt about that. But the atmosphere in which they lived, thought, moved and worked was a depressing and debasing atmosphere. It was an atmosphere that constantly put them in mind of the loss of the nation's independence. Having drunk deep of Mid-Victorian poli-

tical liberalism, social idealism and religious agnosticism, they naturally and almost unconsciously compared notes and applied the theories of Mid-Victorian English thought to contemporary problems and conditions of Indian thought and life. The great question that faced them wherever they turned their eyes was the loss of national freedom and they began to ask themselves the question, 'How is it that we, a country with a population of nearly thirty crores of people have fallen under the political bondage of a country which commands one sixth of our population?' They could explain this astonishing phenomenon only by convincing themselves that our society is rotten to the core and unless it is refitted, reformed upto the standards of western society, all talk of winning back our political freedom was froth. Our efforts are, they thought, bound to be handicapped on account of the general inferiority which nationally clings to us. The terrible stagnation which they witnessed all around, was really the *result* of political subjection; they regarded it as the *cause* of our political serfdom and the *result* of an unequitable standard of social life. 'Just as according to philosophers whatever we see and hear in this world, we see and hear through the medium of our ego and there is no sense or thought impression which we can receive without the intervening presence of this ego, similarly these reformers considered every problem in the light of this disheartening loss of political liberty. Whatever they said, whatever they felt, whatever they did, was coloured, influenced and inspired by this stern and saddening fact of political dependence.

We do not blame them because they could not rise above their environment. They did or thought the best they could. But their best was handicapped on account of this tremendous psychological handicap. They could not shake off the beliefs imbibed and ideas formed in college life; and as years passed it became an obsession to them,—this need of social reform as condition precedent to political reform.

Their study of Indian society and of English society (or as much as they could see of it) was biased by the

disgrace due to loss of liberty that covered the former and by the glamour of victory that surrounded the latter. They had no opportunities to impartially study these two different societies; and their thoughts had already been coloured by the Mid-Victorian thought of which they were admiring students. No wonder therefore that they saw things through a false medium; no wonder that they attributed an exaggerated importance to the programme of social reform.

Unfortunately for themselves, unfortunately for their country, these men, great and noble that they were, were not fitted to take the roles of social reformers. Neither by character, nor by temperament and personality could they assume the social leadership of their society. Basking in the smiles of Government officials, hankering to be patted upon their backs by Governors and Viceroys, delivering their tirades against Indian society with one eye unconsciously on the approbation of high-placed Englishmen, isolated from Indian society by thought, habits and manner of life,—these people were the very antithesis of real reformers which India needed. Vehicles of gigantic impulses that they were, they had feet of clay.

How could the people follow them, listen to them, act according to them when they could see the small lives of these men as contrasted with their high professions? The first two generations of English educated people shared the inevitable fate of all people who are born and brought up at a transitional stage when the binding influence of the old civilisation has disappeared, and the binding influence of the new civilisation has not yet come into operation. There was nothing in the lives and character of these men that could create confidence and respect in the minds of the people. On the contrary they looked askance at them and their bonafides. Holding high offices under Government or benefited by the Government in other ways, was it possible for them to engage themselves in the battle of political freedom? No! A thousand times no! What else could they do but to preach widow remarriages and female education? That was the line of reasoning which the people took and people were not very far in the wrong,

Every reformer worth the name must be a man of mighty purity, independence and sympathetic imagination and study. Did these people and their more noisy followers satisfy the test? They claimed to be some Godmen come to save India from centuries of decay and degradation! In fact they claimed to be the very first reformers after Buddha! But what a contrast between these men and Buddha for instance! Buddha gave up his throne and the pleasures of a prosperous life for the benefit of mankind. Are these people willing to renounce their Government service and Government patronage for the sake of their scheme of social Reform? Are these people who are delivering big and brave platform speeches in propagation of social Reform living them up and carrying in their own individual lives the gospel, which they seek to throw broadcast for the benefit of the Indian humanity? Are they not unconscious tools in the hands of the Government officials many of whom frankly advised Indians to concentrate on 'poetry, philosophy, religion and social reform'? Why do they not show as great an appreciation for political freedom as they do for social Reform? Why are they so anxious for social reform before political reform? Such were the questions which the people began to ask openly and in the absence of any satisfactory reply to them naturally opposed all schemes of reforms urged by these reformers.

The stagnant condition of Indian civilisation or rather society during the last two thousand years and more might have so impressed the imagination of their reformers as to leave or give them no peace till the gospel of social reform resounded from one end of the country to the other. But the question is 'Did they study Indian thought, culture, civilisation and institutions in the light of Indian ideals and history? Did they sympathetically try to understand the Indian mind instead of or before trying to graft on it the plant of western life, manners and institutions. That was the question at issue and to that question no satisfactory answer could be forthcoming. The first qualification of a reformer is intimate acquaintance with the society which he wants to improve. The wild reck

lessness of these reformers plainly showed that they were wanting, sorely wanting in this very essential qualification. It is all very easy to plume oneself as the first reformer after Buddha but after all not so easy to become a Buddha in mind and spirit. This very inappreciation of the work of scores of reformers before the advent of the English showed utter lack of perspective. It proves, as nothing else proves, that these reformers were totally unfamiliar with Indian progress during the last twenty centuries. Says the Swami :—

“Did India ever stand in want of reformers ? Do you read the history of India ? Who was Ramanuja ? Who was Shankara ? Who was Nanak ? Who was Chaitanya ? Who was Kabir ? Who was Dadu ? Who were all these great preachers, one following the other, a galaxy of stars of the first magnitude ? Did not Ramanuja feel for the lower classes ? Did he not try all his life to admit even the pariah to his community ? Did he not try all his life to admit even the Mahomedans to his own fold ? Did not Nanak confer with the Hindus and Mahomedans and try to bring about a new state of things ? They all tried and their work is still going on.”

So then it will be seen that the race of social reformers in India did not start with the British advent and that even before the ‘liberalizing’ influence of Morleys and Mills, India could produce noblest of reformers who had intimately studied Indian conditions, had the inspiration of genius to devise means and remedies and who had the personality, character and driving power to influence society. Ranade once said “The difficulties are in us, in our inertia, in our weakness, in our incapacity to undergo hard work, in our incapacity to face grave risks. Through centuries of stagnation and dependence we have become weak and helpless. These are our difficulties, old habits have to be changed. We must be men, puritan stalwart men, not afraid to do right, patient but persistent, gentle but resolute, compromising yet progressing.” The implied censure of his followers was literally true and that is why the school of social reform could not thrive and could not absorb men like Lokamanya Tilak

who agreed as regards the necessity of reform but who declared that unless the methods used by the reformers were changed there was no hope for reform. Lokamanya Tilak was the first to see and declare that social reform was a never ending need and that political reform need not wait for social reform. On the contrary he argued that political reform and power would make the introduction of much and long-needed social legislation possible and easy. Therefore he opposed the orthodox social reformers and called upon the country to concentrate upon Political reform, trusting to the adaptability of human nature and the silent progressing work of time to the absorption of all the necessary items of social reform. Lokamanya Tilak's opposition to social reform as it was then preached aroused much criticism and he was severely criticised for speaking with his tongue in his mouth ; but the attitude of Swami Vivekananda towards reformers proves that Lokamanya Tilak was entirely in the right.

The first and foremost objection of Swami Vivekananda to the social Reformers of his time was that while seeking to reform society of its abuses they carelessly and indifferently sought to pull down religion also. Now the abuses inherent in Hindu society had no connection whatsoever with Hindu religion. On the contrary religion had hitherto supplied the motive force to every kind of reform and regeneration. To condemn therefore the abuses that had crept in the society and in the same breath to condemn the religion of our forefathers was short-sighted and besides irrelevant. Had the Reformers concentrated merely on social matters and left religion severely alone, that would have been far better. Says the Swami :—

“The Hindu must not give up his religion but must keep religion within its proper limits and give freedom to society to grow. All the reformers in India made the serious mistake of holding religion accountable for all the horrors of degeneration and went forthwith to pull down the indestructible structure and what was the result ? Failure ! Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohan Roy everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and



caste all together and failed. But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution, which after doing its service is now filling up the atmosphere of India with its stench and it can be removed only by giving back to the people their lost individuality. Every man here (*i.e.*, in U. S. America) knows that he is a *man*. Every man born in India knows that he is a slave of society. Now, freedom is the only condition of growth; take that off, the result is degeneration." (Vol. V, p. 19)

"Thoughtful men within the last few years discovered this but unfortunately they laid it at the door of the Hindu religion and to them the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend! Religion is not at fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy, the want of heart. No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny." (Vol. V, pp. 11-3)

The reason why these reformers mixed up religion and reform was that they had imperfectly assimilated the western and eastern cultures and hence were unable to give correct lead to the nation. The true leaders of the nation can come only from that class of people who have devoutly studied the culture of the land and are anxious to maintain its essential features. Blind imitations of the west can never hope to get sufficient influence with the people. On the one hand, there were these so called reformers, whose only idea of reform was female education and widow marriage and on the other hand, there were the extreme orthodox community which even in these days of social transformations at lightning speed, refused to come out of their old moorings and who had therefore become quite *kupmandukas*. The masses were going down

and down everyday, nobody cared for them and the natural leadership of the country was thus crippled by the bitter controversies between the blind reformers and the blind orthodox. With whom lay the future of the country was a very difficult question to answer. So far as Swamiji was concerned, he had no doubt which of the blind party he would side with, if a choice was forced on him. Says he:—

“There are two great obstacles on our path in India, the Scylla of old orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European civilisation. Of these two, I vote for the old orthodoxy and not for the Europeanized system, for, the old orthodox man may be ignorant, he may be crude but he is a man, he has a faith, he has strength, he stands on his own feet; while the Europeanized man has no backbone, he is a mass of heterogenous ideas picked up at random from every source,—and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonized. He does not stand on his own feet, and his head is running round and round. Where is the motive power of his work?—In a few patronizing pats from the English people: His schemes of reforms, his vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs have as the main spring some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evils? Because the Europeans say so. That is about the reason he gives. I would not submit to that. Stand and die in your own strength. (If there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death. These unbalanced creatures are not yet formed into distinct personalities. What are we to call them,—men, women or animals—while other orthodox people were staunch and were men? ( Vol. III, p. 151 )

This then was the reason of Swamiji's preference of the orthodox and condemnation of the Reformers. For one thing they were blind imitators of the West; secondly they did not know the method how Hindu society had grown since ancient times, what were its strong points and which were its weak points; thirdly they sought to impose social reform upon society as if it was a mango graft. They wanted to pour the wine of Western social life into

the bottle of Indian society. Was this ever possible? Was reform ever carried out in this way? Was reform a matter of transfer, or a matter of graft? The social reformers would seem to think in this way. Swamiji emphatically held that it was not so. Reform to be genuine must be a growth from within. We *cannot reform* society. We can only supply it life-giving materials and enable it to grow or reform according to its own nature. This was the point on which the Swami was very keen. He never liked to pose as the regenerator or reformer of Hindu society! No! That were an impossibility and would be an impertinence. It will thus be seen that his attitude is essentially sane, moderate and rational. Says he:—

“To the reformers, I would point out that I am a greater reformer than anyone of them. They want to reform little bits, I want root and branch reform. Where we differ is in the method; theirs is the method of destruction and mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth. > I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate to our society, this way thou shouldst move and not that. I simply want to be like the little squirrel in the building of Rama's bridge who was quite content to put on the bridge his own quota of sand-dust. This is my position. This wonderful national machine has worked through ages, this wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. Who knows and who dares to say, whether it is good, and how it shall move? 'Thousands of circumstances are crowding round it, giving it a special impulse, making it dull at one time and quicker at another. Who dares command its motion? Ours is only to work as the Gita says without thinking of the results. Feed the national life with the fuel it wants but the growth is its own. None can dictate its growth to it. Evils are plentiful in our society, but so are these evils in every other society. Here, the earth is sometimes soaked with the widow's tears; there in the west, the air is rent with the sighs of the unmarried. Here poverty is the great bane of life; there, the life-weariness of luxury is the great bane that is sitting upon the race. Here men want to commit suicide because they have nothing to eat;

there they commit suicide because they have so much to eat. Evil is everywhere. It is like chronic rheumatism. Drive it from the foot, it goes to the head, drive it from there, it goes somewhere else. It is a question of chasing it from place to place. That is all. Our philosophy teaches that evil and good are eternally conjoined, the obverse and the reverse of the same coin ; you cannot have the one without the other. If you have one, you must have the other ; a wave in the ocean must be at the cost of a hollow elsewhere. Nay, all life is evil. Therefore the only thing we can do is to understand that all this work against evil is more subjective than objective. The work against evil is more educational than actual, however big we may talk. This first of all is the idea of work against evil and it ought to make us calmer, it ought to take fanaticism out of our blood. The history of the world teaches us that wherever there have been fanatical reforms the only result has been that they have defeated their own ends." (Vol. III, pp. 213-4)

It should be noted that the Social Reformers of Swamiji's times were neither fanatical nor sane. It is true that they imitated the fanatics in one of their methods. The condemnatory literature which the reformers have produced, the vituperative language in which they have painted the old orthodoxy, reminds us no doubt of the fanatics. But they never imitated the fanatics in their actions. It is notorious that the reformers were shirkers where action was concerned.\* From Keshab Chandra Sen and Mahadeo Govind Ranade, down to the humblest recruit in the cause of reform, all were big talkers but no doers. In this respect, the reformers were true to the mentality of every liberal. The result of this wide divergence between profession and practice was that the people lost faith in the sincerity of the reformers and the word 'reformer' gradually became a by-word for the lukewarm upholder of reforming ideas.

What, it may be asked, constituted reform according to the Swami ? Did he favour any part of the programme of the social reformers or did he content himself with merely criticising the reformer without offering any con-

structive suggestions of his own? Swamiji was not the man to play the part of the negative reformer. His heart was entirely with the reformers, he wanted them to succeed even in the queer programme they had chalked out for themselves, but he could not persuade himself to accept the limited range of their outlook and the peculiarly perverted way in which they looked at Indian society and religion. Hence his criticism of the reformers. Swamiji's characteristic was that he always went to the root of any question. He was not content with tinkering measures, or slipshod ways or half-hearted methods. He was firmly convinced that the reformers were putting the cart before the horse. To confine the activities of a whole society to solitary questions like widow remarriage was not the best way of accelerating the speed of the reformatory movement. 'What therefore we must do' said the Swami was to go to the root of the question and tackle the masses. Why confine your activities to a few high castes? Why not go to the nation that is living in the huts. Says he:—

"Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But alas! Nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but *upon the condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality, without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality and freedom, work and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts?" (Vol. V, pp. 25-26)

"You talk of social reform. But what do you do? All that you mean by social reform is either widow remarriage or female emancipation or something of that sort. And these again are directed within the confines of a few castes only. Such a scheme of reforms may do good to a few no doubt but of what avail is that to the whole nation? Is that reform or a form of selfishness? Of course there is need of it all. But these things do not touch

the poor masses. They have already those things—widow remarriage, female emancipation which you cry for. My method of treatment is to take out by the roots the very causes of the disease and not to keep them merely suppressed. Reforms we should have in many ways. Who will be so foolish as to deny it? There is for example a good reason for inter-marriage in India, in the absence of which, the race is becoming physically weaker and weaker day by day.” (Vol. V, p. 249)

To a certain class of the reformers, the awakening and the elevation of the masses means and is synonymous with the pulling down of the Brahmins and other higher castes. To them, the masses cannot rise within the demolishing of the superstructure of the caste system. Unless the Brahmin is made to go, there is no hope for the masses. This is what they think, believe and say. That is the meaning of the deadly Brahminphobia we have been witnessing during the last many years. ‘Down with the Brahmins’ has become the battle cry of the masses. Round this banner of Brahmin hatred have gathered the masses. The Brahmins have been supposed to be in sole monopoly of priesthood, social leadership, public service, learned professions, public leadership, intellectual eminence. And the attempt of the non-Brahmins has been recently to dislodge the Brahmins from this position of supposed advantage and monopolized power, self and public leadership. The Swami was emphatically of opinion that the need of the hour is not Brahmin hatred but the rising of the level of the masses. Swamiji respected Brahminhood, non-Brahmin though he was and he wanted the masses to rise in such a way that the Brahmin would not suffer. Says he:—

“The Brahminhood is the ideal of humanity in India, as wonderfully put forward by Shankaracharya at the beginning of his commentary on the Gita, where he speaks about the reason for Krishna’s coming as a preacher for the preservation of Brahminhood, of Brahminness. That was the great end. This Brahmin, the man of God, he who has known the Brahman, the ideal man, the perfect man, must remain, he must not go. And with

all the defects of the castes now, we know, we must all be ready to give to the Brahmins this credit that from them have come more men with real Brahminness in them than from all the other castes.

"The solution of the question is not by bringing down the higher but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. And that is the line of work that is found in all our books, in spite of what you may hear from people whose knowledge of their own scriptures and whose capacity to understand the mighty plans of the ancients are only zero. What is the plan? The ideal at one end is the Brahmin and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin. Slowly and slowly you find more and more privileges given to them. There are books where you read such fierce words as these 'If the Sudra hears the Vedas, fill his ears with molten lead, and if he remembers a line, cut his tongue out.' This is diabolical old barbarism; that goes without saying; but do not blame the lawgivers, who simply record the customs of some section of the community; such devils sometimes arose among the ancients. Later on, this tone is modified a little. "Do not disturb the Sudras but do not teach them higher things.' Then gradually we find in other Smritis that if the Sudras imitate the manners and customs of the Brahmins, they do well, they ought to be encouraged. I have no time to place before you all these workings nor how they can be traced in detail. But coming to plain facts, we find that all the castes are to rise, slowly and slowly. Let us suppose that there are castes here with ten thousand people in each. If these put their heads together and say 'we will call ourselves Brahmins,' nothing can stop them. Those great epoch makers, Shankaracharya and others were great caste makers. They would sometimes get hordes of Baluchees and at once make them Kshatriyas, also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith. They were all Rishis and we have to bow down to their memory.

"I regret that in modern times there should be so much discussion between the castes. This must stop.

It is useless on both sides, especially on the side of the higher castes, because the day for these privileges and exclusive claims is gone. The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its grave and the sooner it does so the better. The more it delays the more it will fester and the worse death it will die. It is the duty of the Brahmin therefore to work for the salvation of the rest of mankind in India. If he does that, and so long as he does that, he is a Brahmin, but he is no Brahmin when he goes about making money. You, on the other hand, should give help only to the rightful Brahmin, who deserves it. To the Brahmins I appeal that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries. To the non-Brahmin castes I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin because you are suffering from your own fault. It was not the fault of the Brahmin that he marched ahead of the other castes. Why did the other castes sit down and let the Brahmin to win the race? Who told you to neglect spirituality and learning? Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspaper, use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has. The moment you do this, you are equal to the Brahmin. That is the secret of power." (Vol. III, pp. 295-8)

This exhortation of the Swami will prove that while he was anxious that the masses should be elevated, he would be no party to measures intended to pull down the Brahmin. He had the highest respect for Brahminhood, and he wanted to preserve it in its pristine purity. He was emphatically against using the work of uplifting the masses as a cloak for mudslinging directed against the Brahmins. 'Caste jealousies ought to stop immediately' that was his opinion and in the course of his very short public life he did everything to minimise this evil.

It has been often asked: 'What exactly was the attitude of the Swami towards the vexed caste question? Was he in favour of abolishing caste or of maintaining it?' The first remark that we ought to make about this is that



the Swami hated caste in the very beginning, probably as a result of his close early association with the Brahmo Samaj. Later on when he saw that in U. S. America and other countries where there were no castes of the Indian variety, the *caste feeling* still remained and manifested itself out in various ways, he began to think that after all there might be something useful and hence he began to support it though in an improved and modified form. Says he:—

“We must revive the old laws of the *Rishis* ; we must initiate the whole people into the codes of our old Manu and Yajnavalkya with a few modifications here and there to adjust them to the changed circumstances of the times. Do you not see that nowhere in India now are the original four castes to be found. We have to redivide the four main castes of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras as of old. The numberless modern subdivisions of the Brahmanas that split them up into so many castes as it were, have to be abolished and a single Brahmin caste to be made by uniting them all. Each of the three remaining castes also will have to be brought similarly into single groups as was the case in Vedic times. Without this, will the motherland be really benefited by your simply crying out, ‘we won’t touch you’ ‘we won’t take him back into our caste?’ Never!” (Vol. V, p. 322)

And this brings us to the problem of untouchability. The Swami was probably the first great Indian to champion the cause of the untouchables. In these days when the grip of social laws and social tyranny is considerably relaxed, and none is penalised for sins of touching or eating anywhere, it is comparatively easy to defy convention and preach the doctrine of equality with special reference to the condition of the Depressed classes ; but in those ‘unregenerate’ days it was not so easy to disregard orthodoxy and that Swamiji should have tackled this question of untouchability almost before the commencement of his career shows how very keen he was from remedying the anomalies that had crept in Hindu religion and society. His heart bled at the spectacle of the misery, and destitution to which the untouchables were reduced. This state

of things showed absence of justice and equity in the social life, absence of adaptability and practical spirit in religious organism and indifference to the encroachments of other religions from the National point of view. All this moved the heart of the Swami as nothing else did and in bitter words of reproach and agony he writes:—

“To what a ludicrous state are we brought! If a *bhangī* comes to anybody as a *bhangī*, he would be shunned as the plague; but no sooner does he get a cupful of water poured upon his head with some mutterings of prayers by a *padri* and get a coat to his back, no matter how threadbare, and come into the room of the most orthodox Hindu, I don't see the man who then dares refuse him a chair and a hearty shake of hands! Irony can go no further. And come and see what they, the *padris*, are doing here in the Deccan. They are converting the lower classes by lakhs; and in Travancore, the most priest-ridden country in India, where every bit of land is owned by the Brahmins, and the females, even of the royal family, hold it as high honour to live in concubinage with the Brahmanas,—nearly one fourth has become Christian! And I cannot blame them; what part have they in David and what in Jesse? When, when, O Lord, shall man be brother to man?” (Vol. V, p. 2)

“If anybody is born of a low caste in our country, he is gone forever, there is no hope for him. Why, what a tyranny it is? There are possibilities, opportunities and hope for every individual in this (U. S. America) country. To-day he is poor, to-morrow he may become rich and learned and respected. What are we doing for the low, the down trodden masses of India? ‘Don't touch’ ‘Don't touch’ is the only phrase that plays upon our lips! How mean and degraded has our eternal religion become at our hands? Wherein does our religion lie now? In ‘don't touchism’ alone and nowhere else!” (Vol. V, p. 23)

Thus according to the Swami, the only effective way of Social Reform was to give back their individuality to the masses which by centuries of poverty and tyranny they had lost! Uplift the masses. Awaken the masses! That is the key not only to social reform but to the regener-

ation of the land of the Aryans ! Nobody except Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda has preached this doctrine of the uplift of the masses with such insistence. Says the Swami :—

“ This is my objection against the reformers. The orthodox have more faith and more strength in themselves, in spite of their crudeness. But the reformers simply play into the hands of the Europeans and pander to their vanity. Our masses are gods as compared with those of other countries. This is the only country where poverty is not a crime. They are mentally and physically handsome. But we hated and hated them till they have lost faith in themselves. They think that they are born slaves. Give them their rights, and let them stand upon those rights. This is the glory of the American civilisation. Compare the Irishman with knees bent, half-starved, with a little stick and bundle of clothes, just arrived from the ship, with what he is after a few months' stay in America. He walks boldly and bravely. He has come from a country where he was a slave to a country where he is a brother.” (Vol. V, p. 153)

If thus the masses are given the needful opportunity and the necessary means to make a start, they can show infinite capacity for self-expression, development and progress. Some are afraid that they will push the higher castes down and usurp their place. But all these fears, the Swami thought were born of distrust and fear and self-interest. If religion is properly taught to them, if the national genius and mission are properly brought home to them, if the meaning and object of the social system of the Hindus is thoroughly explained to them, the Swami felt sure that the lower castes would co-operate with the higher castes in the pursuit of the national goal. Swamiji's final synthesis and matured views on caste leave no doubt that he was perfectly aware of the immense potentialities of a healthy system of castes.

“ I do not propose ” says the Swami “ any levelling of castes. Caste is a very good thing. Caste is the plan we want to follow. What caste really means, not one in a million understands. There is no country in the world

without caste. In India from caste we reach to a point where there is no caste. Caste is based throughout on that principle. The plan in India is to make everybody Brahmana, the Brahmana being the ideal of humanity. If you read the history of India, you will find that attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes. Many are the classes that have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole will become Brahmana. That is the plan. We have only to raise them without bringing down anybody. And this has mostly to be done by the Brahmanas because it is the duty of every aristocracy to dig its grave. Indian caste is better than the caste which prevails in Europe or America. I do not say it is absolutely good. Where will you be if there were no castes? Where would be your learning and other things if there were no caste? There would be left nothing for Europeans to study if caste had never existed! The Mahomedans would have smashed everything to pieces. Where do you find the Indian society standing still? It is always on the move. Sometimes, as in times of foreign invasions the movement has been slow, at other times quicker. Caste should not go, but should be only adjusted occasionally. Within the old structure is to be found life enough for the building of two hundred thousand new ones. It is sheer nonsense to desire the abolition of caste. The new method is—the evolution of the old." (Vol. V, pp. 144-5) .

Swamiji, though a Brahmacharin, had frequently to associate with women as co-workers or disciples. He had therefore very frequent opportunities of thinking over the problems of Indian womanhood. The more he lived among and associated with cultured American women, the more he wished Indian women to rise in the scale of education and social life. Regarding the American women, the Swami wrote:—

"Well educated men there are in our country, but you will scarcely find anywhere women like those here (U. S. America). It is indeed true that the 'Goddess Herself' lives in the houses of virtuous men as Lakshmi'. I have seen thousands of women here whose hearts are as pure and stainless as snow. Oh! How free they are! It

is they who control social and civic duties. Schools and colleges are full of women! Their kindness to me is immeasurable.

"Do you know who is the real 'Sakti Worshipper'? It is he who knows that God is Omnipresent Force in the universe, and sees in women the manifestation of that force. Many men here look upon their women in this light. Manu, again has said that gods bless those families where women are happy and well-treated. Here men treat women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free, so energetic. But why is it that we are slavish, miserable and dead? The answer is obvious:—

"And how pure and chaste they are here! Few women are married before twenty or twenty-five, and they are as free as birds in the air! They go to market, school and college, earn money and do all kinds of work. Those who are well-to-do devote themselves to doing good to the poor. And what are we doing? We are regularly marrying our girls at eleven years of age lest they should become corrupt and immoral. What does Manu enjoin? 'Daughters should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as the sons.' As sons should be married after observing Brahmacharya so daughters also must observe Brahmacharya and be educated by their parents. Can you better the condition of your women? Then there will be hope for your well-being." (Vol. V, p. 23)

Swamiji's analysis regarding the present lower status of our women as also the way in which Indian womanhood can be developed leaves nothing to be desired. Says he:—

"The Aryan and Semitic ideals of women have always been diametrically opposed. Among the Semites, the presence of woman is considered dangerous to devotion and she may not perform any religious function even such as the killing of a bird for food. According to the Aryan, a man cannot perform a religious action without a wife.

"Though Hinduism is an Aryan Faith, still modern Hinduism is largely Puranic *i. e.* post-Buddhistic in ori-

gin. Dayananda Saraswati pointed out that though a wife is absolutely necessary in the sacrifice of the domestic fire, which is a Vedic rite, she may not touch the Shaligrama shila or the household idol because that dates from the latter period of the Puranas.

"This evil effect of Buddhism came about with the decay of the faith. Every movement triumphs by dint of some unusual characteristic and when it falls, that point of pride becomes its chief element of weakness. The Lord Buddha was a marvellous organiser and carried the world by this means. But his religion was the religion of a monastic order. It had therefore the evil effect of making the very robe of the monk honoured. He also introduced for the first time the community life of religious houses, and thereby necessarily made women inferior to men since the great abbesses could take no important step without the advice of certain abbots. It ensured its immediate object, the solidarity of the faith, only its far-reaching effects are to be deplored.

"I know that the race which produced Sita has a reverence for womanhood that is unmatched on the earth. There is many a burden bound with legal lightness on the shoulders of western women that is utterly unknown to ours. We have our wrongs and exceptions certainly but so have they. With regard to the domestic virtues, I have no hesitation in saying that our Indian methods have in many ways the advantage over all others.

"Of course our women have many and grave problems but none that are not to be solved by that magic word education. We must educate our women and thus put them in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can and ought to do this for them. To the women of this country I would say exactly what I say to the men. Believe in India and in our Indian Faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed and remember that with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people in the world." (Vol. V, pp. 158-162)

It will thus be seen that the Swami was a reformer all-round but in his programme of reform he relied more on

growth from within than on reform from outside. His programme of social reform was never antagonistic to religion but drew its inspiration therefrom. His reform was not writing on a clean slate but on the slate handed down to us by the ancient sages. His ideal of reform did not imply blind imitation of the west but taking the best that was in ancient Aryan and modern European Civilisation. His reform did not merely stress liberty but laid emphasis on purity also. He wanted the old ideal of purity to be welded with the new ideal of liberty. His reform meant not loss of control, growth of indifference, blind imitation and servile prattling of western reformers' ideas. It meant purity, self-control, tradition, enthusiasm, and a sturdy dependence on indigenous resources.

He did not want reform for the classes only. His reformatory ideals extended to the uttermost limits of the society. The uplift of the depressed classes, the healthy progress of womanhood and the general awakening of the masses, these were the three points in his triangle of Social Reform. The rigidity of the social system he wanted to be relaxed; and he wanted more room for lower ideals including the most ordinary. He did not expect to mould a Buddha out of every agriculturist and labourer. In short he wanted a graded system of cultural ideals which, in olden days was represented in the four *purusharthas*. This and nothing else, he would be content with.

It is now nearly seventy years since the Swami was born and nearly thirty since he entered Mahasamadhi: the ideals of social reform on which he so rigorously insisted are finding acceptance everywhere. The masses of India have been awakened, as they never were awakened since the heydays of Buddhism. The womanhood of India is coming into its own. The curse of untouchability is being surely though slowly obliterated. The old rigidity of the social system is being relaxed; and all the graded sections of the society are thus exposed to the healthy breeze of knowledge, progress and community rights; and the abnormal other-worldliness of the old times is being replaced by a joy of life and a keen interest in all its exciting games.

## CHAPTER X

### PRESENT AND FUTURE OF INDIA

Sister Nivedita has narrated in beautiful language the struggle in the heart of her Master between his allegiance to his motherland and allegiance undiluted to the cause of truth and the world. To her the Swami at one time appeared to be a patriot of the first water, proud of the greatest of ancient India, proud of her spirituality and civilisation, proud of her noble history and culture; at another time he appeared to regard India as a unit in the general evolution of mankind and seemed to take pride in the title of the citizen of the world. These moods were ever shifting and ever changing, lending charm to the conversation and heightening the effect of personality. When he would lose himself in splendid scorn of apology for anything India, in fiery repudiation of false charge and contemptuous criticism or in laying down for others the elements of a hope and love which could be never but a pale reflection of his own, how often did the habit of the monk seem to slip away from him and the armour of the warrior stand revealed? On such occasion people saw the patriot in the Swami, soldier and patriot in one. At the Chicago Parliament of Religions, Mrs. Besant met the Swami and has preserved her first impression of his dynamic personality. 'Monk they called him' says she 'not unwarrantably, but a warrior-monk was he and the first impression was rather of the warrior than of the monk.' The Swami's personality was a harmonious blending of *sattvik* and *rajasik* elements, of Brahma *tej* and true warrior mettle. It was inevitable therefore that even in his early youth he should be drawn towards patriotism. In fact patriotism was his first love; religion came later. But while religion claimed more and more of his love, devotion and attention, the first love was not entirely forgotten. During all his public career, the Swami never forgot the country. It can be said that every one of his conscious and unconscious thoughts was directed to the interests of the Motherland.

But while his early collegiate patriotism was partly emotional and partly result of acquaintance with western



history and western national ideals, the patriotism of his youth, when he was being chiselled and modelled by Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, was the patriotism born of his love of religion. India to him became the holiest of the holy because India was the home of spirituality and of everything great and good. The earlier patriotism was to a certain extent thrown in the background and during all the later period of his discipleship with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa he never had a thought of doing anything for the country. Highest realization was then the goal on which he had set his heart. 'What do you want?' once asked his Master to him and the answer which Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda, gave is characteristic. He said 'I want to be immersed in Samadhi for a number of days at a stretch.' But more characteristic is the reply which the Master gave to this expression of his longing by Narendranath. He said 'I thought you wanted to be something higher. There is a still higher stage' and that stage was according to Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa doing Mother's work for the country. This higher stage was especially mentioned in view of the make-up of Swamiji's personality. But as far as can be interpreted, the Master thought all active and absorbing work as the result of ignorance; for had he not often and often said in reference to the mental formation of his favourite disciple?—'There is a little film of ignorance on his mind! My mother has kept it there that her work may be done! It is as thin as the sheet of a tissue paper! It may be rent at any time.' And the Swami himself regarded all work as secondary and tried to remain faithful to the banner of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Just as one who has forsworn them would struggle against thoughts of home and family, the Swami struggled in his later days against all thoughts of country and nationality and wanted to make of himself that poor and homeless wanderer to whom every country and religion should be alike. True, it was not possible for him to do this and even before he knew it, he would be a patriot, a nationalist, a worker in the cause of Vedanta, but this invariably appeared to him to be a lapse.

To return to the point at which we had left. Though, after the Mahasamadhi of the Master Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Swami out of regard for his memory established the Belur Math, still he had very little inclination to accept even the golden chain of this spiritual bondage. He wanted to go up the Himalayas, practise severest penance and achieve highest realization. With this object in view he left Calcutta and was for months on the Himalayas. It was at Hrishikesh, while lying semi-conscious after a severe illness, that inspiration came to Swami to do 'Mother's work' as his master used to say; and thence, instead of locking himself up on the Himalayas, he moved about the land, wandered over central and southern India, all the while finding out what the Mother's work may be. It can well be seen that now the Swami was in a mood to do work for the country and for the cause, and it remained a mere matter of detail what form that work should take.

It was during the thirty months of his Central and South India wanderings that the patriot in the Swami was really born. These months of wide and various travelling put him into real and intimate touch with the heart of India and gave free scope to his patriotic instinct. On the one hand the Swami utilized this opportunity for the continuation of the intensive study of Vedanta and philosophy and metaphysics in general, on the other hand, the Swami studied the heart of Indian society at first hand and was appalled at the deep poverty and misery of the masses. What patriots like Dadabhai Naoroji *learnt* after patiently wading through bewildering masses of statistics, Swami Vivekananda *saw* through direct contact with the poorest of the poor. And his experiences in and observations of the life and conditions in Indian villages roused the patriot in him. The teachings of western liberalism and philosophy were not able to lure him to the path of patriotism but were regarded more or less as a distraction in the intensive pursuit of the religious ideal. But these intimate and personal experiences taught him ~~as~~ nothing else taught that if Vedanta is to sustain its title as the premier religion of the world, the starvation and the misery of the masses must be remedied forthwith: That

religion which is not able to provide bread and consolation to the heart of the widow, shelter and hope to the heart of the poor, is no religion. That was the conclusion to which the Swami arrived when wandering all over India. It was this humanitarian and practical aspect of the Vedanta that impressed the Swami most. The heart of the Swami was as tender as a flower and all the sufferings of his countrymen produced the profoundest impression on that heart.

The Swami was at once a man of the head and of the heart. His genius rose to the sublimest heights of inspiration and he could reach truth by sheer force and flight of analysis and synthesis and at the same time love, devotion, kindness, gentility, sympathy and like qualities of the heart were developed in him in an abundant measure. The result was that his feelings made him one in spirit with the poorest of the poor and his intellect made him think of the way to redress these miseries. The Swami was Shankaracharya and Chaitanya in one. The natural dryness which is the general accompaniment of a mighty intellect was cured in him by a warm heart and naturally therefore the religion of the Swami was, to use the expressive words of Macaulay, 'reason fused and made red hot with passion.' It was a harmonious combination of the head and the heart.

The patriotism of the Swami was not the patriotism of the average politician. It was not the patriotism of the 'my country—right or wrong' variety. It was not the patriotism of the narrow-minded bigot or the sectarian. It was the patriotism of a man who sincerely considers himself to be the citizen of the world but who regards his love for and work in and through a particular country as the means of helping the world. To the Swami his love of India and devotion to her magnificent religion seemed the best means of supplying the crying needs of the world. To the Swami Vedanta did not mean a ready propagandist weapon for the benefit of the land of the Hindus. Swamiji valued Vedanta because he considered it as the sole remaining salvation for the world; and even when preaching Vedanta, the Swami took care to declare that

he expected it to supply only the deficiency in the other religions of the world and that he did not expect the Christians to renounce the religion of their forefathers. 'Let Vedanta enable the Christian to become a better Christian' and Swamiji was content.

So then according to the Swami, the whole civilised world was going astray and in the pride and pomp of pelf and power was heading more and more to materialism which meant the very negation of the spirit; and the evils that he witnessed in the western society, he attributed solely to the deficiency of Spiritual quantities and greater and greater gravitation of the world to naked and unabashed materialism. How to purge the world of this evil? How to bring real happiness to mankind? How to make this journey of life less thorny and burdensome and more cheery and joyful? These were the questions that Swamiji set himself to solve and the only reply and the only solution which he could give and find was summed up in one word 'Vedanta'. Vedanta must be taught to the world. But who was to teach it? Who was to play the role of the teacher spiritual? Says he:—

"If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punayabhumi, the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all the land of introspection and spirituality, it is India. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me my friends, this is going to be." (Vol. III, p. 105)

"I am anxiously waiting for the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds who will be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world to teach spirituality and renunciation, those ideas which come from the forests of India and belong to Indian soil alone." With this view of the Swami, it is natural that he considered India as the centre from which all efforts to rejuvenate and revivify the world were to radiate; and for India to accomplish this heaven-given mission, it was necessary that the great religion of the Aryas should itself be rejuvenated and revivified. In other words, the interests of the world demanded that India should arise, shake off her age-long lethargy and live up to the traditions of her past glory. So then the regeneration of the world depended on the regeneration of India which is the same thing as saying that the interests of humanity depended on the patriotism of the Swami. It will thus be seen that the patriotism of the Swami was something far higher than the ordinary patriotism of the average politician. The average politician never thinks in terms of humanity nor does the success of his patriotism ever result in the benefit to the human race. It has till now been very frequently said that the international activities of the Swami were always conducted with an eye on the work and awakening in India. Swamiji himself once wrote that 'one blow struck in the west is equivalent to a hundred thousand struck in India,' and what he said was literally true. But it must also be recognized that his Indian work too was conducted with an eye to world awakening and spiritual progress.

So we see in studying the development of Swamiji's personality and life work, that so far as he was concerned, the words national and international bore identical meaning, that when he was working in America and England his work in India was growing apace and that when on his return to India, he commenced in right earnest the work in and for the benefit of the land of his birth, he was in truth labouring for the far-off seekers after Light in Europe and America. A patriot of this type is always a blessing wherever he goes; Swamiji himself has set forth in glowing terms the ideal of his patriotism. Says he:—

"They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism and also have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary. First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates. Do you feel that millions of your countrymen are starving to-day and have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land like a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of misery? That is the first step to become a patriot. You may feel but have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help to bring people out of this living death? That is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand would you still dare to do what you think is right? If you have these three things each one of you will work miracles."

It is wonderful how Swamiji's mind became so full of patriotism of the highest kind and the only answer that one can give is that the Swamiji's patriotism was the result of a synthetic study of the history of the world and the unquestioned leadership of India in all matters spiritual. In glowing and almost poetic words, Swamiji has thus described the glories of India :—

"In ancient times and in modern times, great ideas have emanated from strong and vigorous races. In ancient times and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tide of national life but in every case, it has been with the blast of war trumpet, with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of orphans and the tears of widows. Thus in the main other nations have taught, but India has for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed, even when Greece did not exist, when Rome was not thought of, when the very modern Europeans dwelt in forests and painted themselves blue. Even earlier, where History has no record and tradition dare not peer into the gloom of that

intense past, even from then until now, idea after idea has marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and a peace before it. We alone of all nations of the earth have never been a conquering race and that blessing is on our head and therefore we live. • There was a time when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions, the earth trembled. Vanished from off the face of earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is the ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; the power of Rome was felt and pressed on the head of humanity. The earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline hill is now a mass of ruins, and the spider weaves its head where Cæsars ruled. There have been other nations, equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and exuberant Dominion and of a wicked national life, then vanishing like ripples on the face of waters. Thus have these nations made their mark on the face of humanity but we live and if Manu comes back to-day, he would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here, laws adjusted and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs which are the result of the acumen of ages and experience of centuries that seem to be eternal. And as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune is delivered upon them, they see to get fresh strength only that of making them constant and more permanent. And to find the centre of all this, the heart from which the blood flows, the main-spring of the national life, believe me when I say after my experience of the world, that it is here." (Vol. III, p. 107)

There are some wisecracks who would say 'what is the good of looking back to the past? Why waste time in thinking of past glories? Why not concentrate on the present to build a noble superstructure of thought and life for the future?' The objection would be right if it means an impatience to run to the future after all the necessary inspiration has been absorbed from the past. The Swami was conscious of the change that was coming over India and of the ultimate healthy effect it will have upon the

condition of the world. If only India, which was the original 'Power House' of Spirituality, comes to her own, realises that her Spirituality is needed by the world, in fact is awakened from her long sleep, the future is assured. Says the Swami :—

"The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be waking, and a voice is coming to us,—away back, where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were, from peak to peak of the Infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India this Motherland of ours—a voice is coming to us, gentle firm and yet unmistakable in its utterances and is gaining volume as days pass by and behold the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away and only the blind cannot see or the perverted will not see that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more. Never is she going to sleep any more. No outward powers can hold her back any more. For the infinite giant is rising to her feet." (Vol. III, pp. 145-6)

The Swami was sure and certain that this awakening of India was going to revolutionize the world. The future of India is going to be bright. The Hindus must remain, he thought, fully conscious of this fact and must, for the purpose, keep themselves true to their mission. If they only did this, then the future was in the palm of their hands. Says the Swami :—

"Therefore, my friends, the way out is, that first and foremost, we must keep a firm hold on spirituality,—that inestimable gift handed down to us by our ancient forefathers. Did you ever hear a country where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent, not to kings not to robber barons living in old castles, who plundered poor travellers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forests? Did you ever hear of such a land? This is the land. In other countries, great priests try to trace their descent to some king, but here, the greatest kings try to trace their



descent to some ancient priest. Therefore, whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of the national life you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life ; and out of that a wonderful, glorious, future India will come—I am sure it is coming—a greater India than ever was. Sages will spring up, greater than all the ancient sages, and your ancestors will not only be satisfied but I am sure they will be proud from their positions in other worlds to look down upon their descendants, so glorious and so great. Let us all work hand in hand, my brethren, this is no time for sleep. On our work, depends the coming of the India of the future. Arise, awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was,—this motherland of ours.” (Vol. III, pp.153-4)

It was the firm conviction of the Swami that only India could save the world. This seemed, to the unobserving minds, a very preposterous claim for India to make especially when she was reduced to the last depths of misery and poverty and Europe and America were enthroned in power and supremacy. But the Swami always looked beneath the surface. He found from close observation and experience of three continents that the boasted civilisation of Europe and America was on the brink of a collapse and that unless the spirituality of India came to its aid, there was no hope for it. It was from this point of view that he studied the tide of Spirituality of which Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the visible starter. Says he :—

“ Whenever this world of ours, on account of growth, on account of added circumstances, requires a new adjustment, a wave of power comes, and as man is acting on two planes, the spiritual and the material, waves of adjustment come on both planes. On the one side, of the adjustment on the material plane, Europe has mainly been the basis during modern times, and of the adjustment on the other, the spiritual plane, Asia has been the basis throughout the history of the world. To-day man re-

quires one more adjustment on the spiritual plane ; to-day when material ideas are at the height of their glory and power, to-day when man is likely to forget his divine nature, through his growing dependence on matter, and is likely to be reduced to a mere money-making machine, an adjustment is necessary ; the voice has spoken, and the power is coming to drive away the clouds of gathering materialism. The power has been set in motion, which at no distant date will bring unto mankind once more the memory of its real nature and again the place from which this power will start will be Asia. From the Orient comes the voice which once told the world, that if a man possess everything that is under the sun and does not possess spirituality, what avails it ? Therefore it is fitting that whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the Orient. When the Occident has to learn anything about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and mystery of life and of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn. (Vol. IV, pp. 150-52)

“There never was a time in the world’s history when there was so much robbery and highhandedness, and tyranny of the strong over the weak, as at this latter end of the nineteenth century. Everybody should know that there is no salvation except through the conquering of desires, and that no man is free who is subject to the bondage of matter. We Hindus have now been placed, under God’s providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the west are coming to us for spiritual help. A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence.” (Vol. III, pp. 138-39)

Spirituality thus being our national mission, it was necessary for every child of the motherland to see that the work in connection with this national mission was pushed with extreme vigour. We Indians have gigantic problems, political, social, industrial, economic and others. But even the solution of these problems rests on the way in which our spiritual mission is performed. An English boy instinctively feels that he is born to rule over the world. Similarly

every Indian child must feel that his mission is to be the spiritual teacher of the world. Says the Swami :—

“ Each man has a mission in life, which is the result of all his infinite past Karma. Each of you was born with a splendid heritage, which is the result of the infinite past life of your glorious nation. And what is the mission with which every Hindu child is born? Have you not read the proud declaration of Manu regarding the Brahmana, where he says that the birth of the Brahmana is for the ‘protection of the treasury of religion’? I should say that *that* is the mission not only of the Brahmana, but of every child, whether boy or girl, who is born in the blessed land ‘for the protection of the treasury of religion.’ The secret of a true Hindu’s character lies in the subordination of his knowledge of science, of his wealth and position, to that one principal theme, which is inborn in every Hindu child,—the spirituality and the purity of the race. Just as in the case of the individual, the principle of life is undisturbed, any injuries received are not serious, do not kill the individual, so also, as long as this principal function of our life is not disturbed nothing can destroy our nation. But mark you, if you give up that spirituality leaving it aside to go after the materialising civilisation of the West, the result will be that in three generations, you will be an extinct race.” (Vol. III, p. 152-3)

What according to the Swami the situation demanded was a thorough consciousness of strength on the part of the Hindus. We must feel that we are a strong, live, virile race. We must feel that the future is with us. Our consciousness of strength will remove all the weaknesses of our political and other subordination. To the average reformer, social or political, the removal of this external subordination meant everything and he sought to concentrate all energies on this problem. But the Swami thought otherwise. He wanted that the inner spirit should be changed first. Take care of the spirit and the outer environment will be, he thought, almost automatically adjusted. This does not mean that he did not recognize the need of efforts in, say the political or the economic field. We stood for progress all round. But he felt first

the need of spiritual effort because that was an effort where success depended entirely upon ourselves, where old traditions are completely in our favour, where impediments are so few and where we are sure to win. And once we were standing in the glory of our spiritual strength, what power was there that would dare raise its eyes on us and try to thwart our progress? The need of the hour was a resurgence of the idea of strength; and that, he felt, could be easily achieved by relying upon our old spirituality. Says he :—

“Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember. It has been the one great lesson, I have been taught in my life. Strength, it says, strength, Oh man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses? says man. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weaknesses heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength, oh man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong. Aye, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word ‘abhiḥ’ ‘fearless’ used again and again; in no other scripture is the adjective applied either to God or to man. ‘Abhiḥ’ ‘fearless’. And in my mind rises from the past the vision of the Great Emperor of the West, Alexander the Great, and I see, as it were in a picture, the Great monarch standing on the banks of the Indus, talking to one of our Sanyasins in the forest; the old man he was talking to, perhaps naked, sitting on a block of stone, and the Emperor, astonished at his wisdom, tempting him with gold and honour to come over to Greece. And this man smiles at his gold, smiles at his temptations and refuses, and then the Emperor, standing on his authority—as an Emperor says ‘I will kill you, if you don’t come’ and the man bursts out into a laugh and says ‘Me you kill, Emperor of the material world? Never! For I am spirit unborn and undecaying! Never was I born, never do I die, I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient.’ This is strength, this is strength. What we want is strength! Who will give us Strength? As one of your blood, let me tell you my friends that we want strength, strength and every

time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. The whole world can be vivified, made strong and energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, the down-trodden of all races, all creeds, all sects to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and Spiritual freedom are the watch-words of the Upanishads." (Vol. III, pp. 237-38)

But the Swami was not a mere idealist. He was not a theorist merely. He was a practical man and he knew, more than any body else, how and why this great ideal of the Upanishads failed to be absorbed by the later generations of the sons and daughters of the motherland! He deeply resented the physical conditions that made India the plaything of invaders of every kind and clime during the last one thousand years and more. Was India a land which is to be transferred from one despotism to another? Is that her destiny? Is that the mission of India? Is India to be the dumping ground of other races, sects, creeds, nationalities? Does this vast land of immense resources and reserves of wealth of every description exist for the benefit and exploitation of the foreigner? Are we eternally doomed to live a life of poverty, squalor and starvation only to make other nations of the world rich and powerful? None will care to answer these questions in the affirmative and yet the conditions of India prove to an impartial observer that that has been the invariable experience of the past. Why? Why should India be enslaved? Why should India, the land of spiritual freedom, have lost her physical freedom, which is the first condition of the existence of that freedom? The reason is, according to the Swami, neglect of the physical plane of our existence. We must take care of our bodies. We must develop physical strength. Says he:—

"In spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, compared to many other races of the world, I must tell you we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries,

We are lazy. We cannot work. We cannot combine. We do not love each other. We are intensely selfish. Not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other. That is the state in which we are, hopelessly disorganized mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our foreheads, this way or that way, writing volumes and volumes upon such momentous questions as to whether the look of a man spoils my food or not! What is the cause of this all? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything. We must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends. That is my advice to you. You will be nearer the Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches; I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better, with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman, when your body stands firm upon your feet and you feel yourselves as men." (Vol. III, pp. 241-42)

With this development of our physical strength, with the renewed and incessant study of the Upanishads and the application of the great Vedantic truths to the facts and problems of life must come a new spirit in us, the spirit to change the hitherto rigidity of our methods. Our ideals have been great no doubt. They were great and they ought to be great. Every generation must find great people to carry out in their lives the great ideals which are our proud heritage. But every Indian cannot be expected to be a Buddha or a Ramakrishna Paramahansa and must not be expected to fall in line with the highest ideals. Why should the life of the average man be hedged round with the spiritual fences for which he has no use? Why should every man be compelled to make the pitch of his music suit the highest tune of the Vedan-

ta? If I am weak, if I am lacking in those qualities that go to make a Vedantin, should I nevertheless be condemned, parrotlike to go through all the drill that would help only a man with superior spiritual endowment and equipment? That is the question. And this question was never fairly and squarely faced by our national leaders since the times of Buddha. The mistake of the followers of Buddha lay in this that they 'pegged' the ordinary man up to the standard of the highest in the vain effort to make us a race of spiritual giants. Such feats are impossible of achievement and are apt to recoil as they actually have recoiled on ourselves. On this point the Swami's views are very pronounced. Says he:—

“ Perhaps some sort of materialism, toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and in every society and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them has been made of late. My method need not be yours. The Sanyasin, as you all know, is the ideal of the Hindu's life, and every one, by our Shastras, is compelled to give up. Every Hindu who has tasted the fruits of this world must give up in the latter part of his life. We know that this is the ideal,—to give up after seeing and experiencing the vanities of life. Having found out that the heart of the material world is a mere hollow, containing only ashes, give it up and go back. But the ideal can only be realized after a certain amount of experience. We cannot teach the child the truth of renunciation. The child is a born optimist. His whole life is in his senses. His whole life is a mass of sense enjoyment. So there are childlike men in every society, who require a certain amount of experience of enjoyment to see the vanity of it, and then renunciation will come to them. There has been ample provision made for them in our books. But unfortunately in later times there is a tendency to bind every one down by the same laws as those by which the Sanyasin is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that a good deal of the

poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been ! A poor man's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off ! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little and then he will raise himself up and renunciation will come to him of itself." (Vol. III, pp. 149-50) .

This point has been amplified by the Swami with his characteristic genius both for analysis and synthesis and both depending for their ultimate truth on wide and varied experience. Says he :—

" With us, the prominent idea is Mukti ; with the westerners it is Dharma. This Moksha path is only in India and nowhere else. There was a time in India when Dharma was compatible with Mukti. There were worshippers of Dharma such as Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Bhishma and Karna, side by side with the aspirants for Mukti such as Vyasa, Suka and Janaka. On the advent of Buddhism, Dharma was entirely neglected and the path of Moksha alone became predominant. The central fact is that the fall of our country, of which we hear so much spoken, is due to the utter want of this Dharma. If the whole nation practises and follows the path of Moksha, that is well and good ; but is that possible ? Without enjoyment renunciation can never come. First enjoy and then you can renounce. When in the heyday of Buddhist supremacy, thousands of sanyasins lived in every monastery, then it was that the country was just on the verge of its ruin. The Hindu scriptures say ' No doubt, Moksha is far superior to Dharma, but Dharma should be finished first of all. ' Just see the irony of things. Jesus Christ, the God of the Europeans, has taught ' Have no enemy ; bless them that curse you ; whoever smites thee on thy right cheek, hold to him the other also ; stop all work and be ready for the next world, the end of the world is at hand. ' And our Lord in the Gita says : ' Always work with great enthusiasm, destroy your enemies and enjoy the world. ' But after all, it turned out to be exactly the reverse of what Christ or Krishna implied. The Europeans never took the word of Jesus seriously. Always of active habits, they are gathering with great enterprise and



youthful ardour, the comforts and luxuries of the different countries of the world and enjoying them to their hearts' content. And we are sitting in a corner with our bag and baggage, pondering day and night and singing the song of the unsteadiness of the world and the vanity of human desires. Who are the followers of the teaching of the Gita? The Europeans! And who are acting according to the will of Jesus Christ? The descendants of Shri Krishna. What does Buddha or Christ prescribe for the man who neither wants Moksha nor is fit to receive it? Nothing! Either you must have Moksha or you are doomed to destruction. It is only the Vedic religion which considers ways and means and lays down rules for the fourfold attainment of man, comprising Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Buddha ruined us!" (Vol. V, pp. 350-51 and 356-7)

Once India was thus roused by a revival of this graded system of Purushartha ideals, once the sons of India decided to fulfil their national and historic mission, what power is there on this earth which will prevent them from fulfilling that time honoured mission, of spreading the spiritual gems to all the quarters of the globe? Says the Swami:—

"Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Thoughts like merchandise can only run through channels made by somebody. Whenever in the history of the world a great conquering nation has arisen, linking different parts of the world together, then has poured through these channels, the thought of India and thus entered into the veins of every race. Before even the Buddhists were born, Indian thought penetrated the world. Before Buddhism, Vedanta had penetrated into China, into Persia, and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Again, when the mighty mind of Greek had linked the different parts of the eastern world together, there came Indian thought; and Christianity with all its boasted civilisation is but a collection of little bits of Indian thought. Ours is the religion, of which Buddhism, with all its greatness is a rebel

child and of which Christianity a very patchy imitation. One of these cycles has again arrived. There is the tremendous power of England which has linked the different parts of the world together. From ocean to ocean run the roads of England. Under these circumstances we find again India reviving and ready to give her own quota to the progress and civilisation of the world.

"There have been great conquering races in the world. We also have been great conquerors. The story of our conquest has been described by the noble Emperor of India, Asoka, as the conquest of religion and spirituality. Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life. I am anxiously waiting for the day when mighty minds will arise, gigantic spiritual minds who will be ready to go forth from India to the ends of the world to teach spirituality and renunciation; those ideas which come from the forests of India and belong to Indian soil alone ! Up, India and conquer the world with your spirituality ! The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought." (Vol. III, pp. 274-7)

It was for the accomplishment of this dream of his life that the Swami gave all his energies and laid down his life. It was for the accomplishment of this dream that the Swami went from one end of the world to the other, meeting starvation face to face, for fourteen years of his life, not knowing where he would get a meal the next day and where he would sleep ! For the accomplishment of this dream did the Swami construct that marvellous organisation in India and abroad which even after his passing away is doing so unique and useful service all over the globe ! It was for the accomplishment of this dream that the Swami called up the young men of the land to sacrifice their careers at the altar of the Motherland and the Mother-religion. For, as he expressively put it, it is the freshest and unsmelt flowers that are to be laid at the feet of the Motherland !

How wonderful, this national ideal of the Swami ! Even in these days of grace, the Ideal that India is consciously striving for is the ideal of national independence.

Swamiji's ideal was super-national. It included the present ideal of national independence and was more extensive in that it wanted to bring the farthest country on the globe under the spiritual suzerainty of India. The Swami was a man of dreams but no idle dreams they were ; and he was not a man to keep himself idle to dream idle dreams. He meant every word he said and it was the ambition of his life to conquer the world with Indian spiritual thought. It was for this purpose that he was patriotic and wanted political independence, social reform, and industrial prosperity. All these were important no doubt but always subordinate to, and means of, the grand ideal of the spiritual conquest of the world.

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